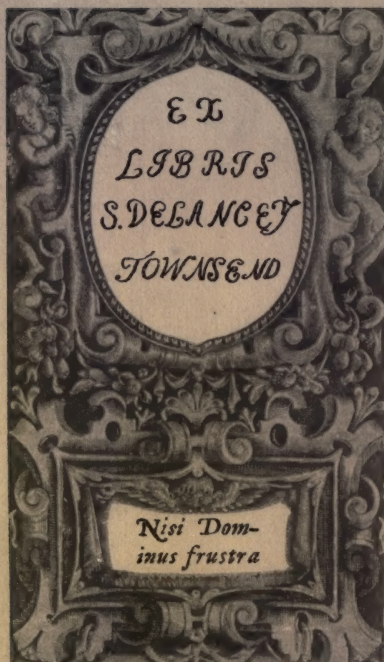


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Number

Portrait Edition

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY

JOHN MORLEY

XIII.

KEATS. By SIDNEY COLVIN

HAWTHORNE. By HENRY JAMES, JR.

● CARLYLE. By JOHN NICHOL



NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1894

ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS.

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY.

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K E A T S

BY

SIDNEY COLVIN

PREFACE.

WITH the name of Keats that of his first biographer, the late Lord Houghton, must always justly remain associated. But while the sympathetic charm of Lord Houghton's work will keep it fresh, as a record of the poet's life it can no longer be said to be sufficient. Since the revised edition of the *Life and Letters* appeared in 1867, other students and lovers of Keats have been busy, and much new information concerning him been brought to light, while of the old information some has been proved mistaken. No connected account of Keats's life and work, in accordance with the present state of knowledge, exists, and I have been asked to contribute such an account to the present series. I regret that lack of strength and leisure has so long delayed the execution of the task entrusted to me. The chief authorities and printed texts which I have consulted (besides the original editions of the Poems) are the following:

1. Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries. By Leigh Hunt. London, 1828.

2. The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley. By Thomas Medwin. 2 vols., London, 1847.

3. Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats. Edited by Richard Monckton Milnes. 2 vols., London, 1848.

4. Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon. Edited and compiled by Tom Taylor. Second Edition. 3 vols., London, 1853.

5. The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt, with Reminiscences of Friends and Contemporaries. 3 vols., London, 1850.

6. The Poetical Works of John Keats. With a Memoir by Richard Monckton Milnes. London, 1854.

7. The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt. [Revised edition, edited by Thornton Hunt.] London, 1860.

8. The Vicissitudes of Keats's Fame: an article by Joseph Severn in the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine* for 1863 (vol. xi., p. 401).

9. The Life and Letters of John Keats. By Lord Houghton. New Edition, London, 1867.

10. Recollections of John Keats: an article by Charles Cowden Clarke in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1874 (N.S., vol. xii., p. 177). Afterwards reprinted with modifications in *Recollections of Writers*, by Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke. London, 1878.

11. *The Papers of a Critic*. Selected from the writings of the late Charles Wentworth Dilke. With a biographical notice by Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, Bart., M.P. 2 vols., London, 1875.

12. Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk. With a Memoir by Frederic Wordsworth Haydon. 2 vols., London, 1876.

13. *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, chronologically arranged and edited, with a memoir, by Lord Houghton [Aldine edition of the *British Poets*]. London, 1876.

14. *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne*, with Introduction and Notes by Harry Buxton Forman. London, 1878.

A biographer cannot ignore these letters now that they are published; but their publication must be regretted by all who hold that human respect and delicacy are due to the dead no less than to the living, and to genius no less than to obscurity.

15. *The Poetical Works and other Writings of John Keats*. Edited, with notes and appendices, by Harry Buxton Forman. 4 vols., London, 1883.

In this edition, besides the texts reprinted from the first editions, all the genuine letters and additional poems published in 3, 6, 9, 13, and 14 of the above are brought together, as well as most of the biographical notices contained in 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, and 12; also a series of previously unpublished letters of Keats to his sister; with a great amount of valuable illustrative and critical material besides. Except for a few errors, which I shall have occasion to point out, Mr. Forman's work might for the purpose of the student be final, and I have necessarily been indebted to it at every turn.

16. *The Letters and Poems of John Keats*. Edited by John Gilmer Speed. 3 vols., New York, 1883.

17. *The Poetical Works of John Keats*. Edited by William T. Arnold. London, 1884.

The Introduction to this edition contains the only attempt with which I am acquainted at an analysis of the formal elements of Keats's style.

18. *An Æsculapian Poet*—John Keats: an article by Dr. B. W. Richardson in the *Asclepiad* for 1884 (vol. i., p. 134).

19. Notices and correspondence concerning Keats which have appeared at intervals during a number of years in the *Athenæum*.

In addition to printed materials I have made use of the following unprinted, viz.:

I. HOUGHTON MSS. Under this title I refer to the contents of an album from the library at Fryston Hall, in which the late Lord Houghton bound up a quantity of the materials he had used in the preparation of the *Life and Letters*, as well as of correspondence concerning Keats addressed to him both before and after the publication of his book. The chief contents are the manuscript memoir of Keats by Charles Brown, which was offered by the writer in vain to *Galiganani*, and I believe other publishers; transcripts by the same hand of a few of Keats's poems; reminiscences or brief memoirs of the

poet by his friends Charles Cowden Clarke (the first draft of the paper above cited as No. 10), Henry Stephens, George Felton Matthew, Joseph Severn, and Benjamin Bailey; together with letters from all the above, from John Hamilton Reynolds, and several others. For the use of this collection, without which my work must have been attempted to little purpose, I am indebted to the kindness of its owner, the present Lord Houghton.

II. WOODHOUSE MSS. A. A common-place book, in which Richard Woodhouse, the friend of Keats and of his publishers, Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, transcribed—as would appear from internal evidence, about midsummer 1819—the chief part of Keats's poems at that date unpublished. The transcripts are in many cases made from early drafts of the poems; some contain gaps which Woodhouse has filled up in pencil from later drafts, to others are added corrections, or suggestions for corrections, some made in the hand of Mr. Taylor and some in that of Keats himself.

III. WOODHOUSE MSS. B. A note-book in which the same Woodhouse has copied—evidently for Mr. Taylor, at the time when that gentleman was meditating a biography of the poet—a number of letters addressed by Keats to Mr. Taylor himself, to the transcriber, to Reynolds and his sisters, to Rice and Bailey. Three or four of these letters, as well as portions of a few others, are unpublished.

Both the volumes last named were formerly the property of Mrs. Taylor, the widow of the publisher, and are now my own. A third manuscript volume by Woodhouse, containing personal notices and recollections of Keats, was unluckily destroyed in the fire at Messrs. Kegan Paul & Co.'s premises in 1883. A copy of *Endymion*, annotated by the same hand, has been used by Mr. Forman in his edition (above, No. 15).

IV. SEVERN MSS. The papers and correspondence left by the late Joseph Severn, containing materials for what should be a valuable biography, have been put into the hands of Mr. William Sharp, to be edited and published at his discretion. In the meantime Mr. Sharp has been so kind as to let me have access to such parts of them as relate to Keats. The most important single piece, an essay on "The Vicissitudes of Keats's Fame," has been printed already in the *Atlantic Monthly* (above, No. 8), but in the remainder I have found many interesting details, particularly concerning Keats's voyage to Italy and life at Rome.

V. *Rawlings v. Jennings*. When Keats's maternal grandfather, Mr. John Jennings, died in 1805, leaving property exceeding the amount of the specific bequests under his will, it was thought necessary that his estate should be administered by the Court of Chancery, and with that intent a friendly suit was brought in the names of his daughter and her second husband (Frances Jennings, *m.* 1st Thomas Keats and 2d William Rawlings) against her mother and brother, who were the executors. The proceedings in this suit are referred to under the above title. They are complicated and voluminous, extending over a period of twenty years, and my best thanks are due

to Mr. Ralph Thomas, of 27 Chancery Lane, for his friendly pains in searching through and making abstracts of them.

For help and information, besides what has been above acknowledged, I am indebted first and foremost to my friend and colleague, Mr. Richard Garnett; and next to the poet's surviving sister, Mrs. Llanos; to Sir Charles Dilke, who lent me the chief part of his valuable collection of Keats's books and papers (already well turned to account by Mr. Forman); to Dr. B. W. Richardson and the Rev. R. R. Hadden. Other incidental obligations will be found acknowledged in the footnotes.

Among essays on and reviews of Keats's work I need only refer in particular to that by the late Mrs. F. M. Owen (*Keats: A Study*, London, 1876). In its main outlines, though not in details, I accept and have followed this lady's interpretation of *Endymion*. For the rest every critic of Modern English poetry is of necessity a critic of Keats. The earliest, Leigh Hunt, was one of the best; and to name only a few among the living—where Mr. Matthew Arnold, Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Lowell, Mr. Palgrave, Mr. W. M. Rossetti, Mr. W. B. Scott, Mr. Roden Noel, Mr. Theodore Watts, have gone before, for one who follows to be both original and just is not easy. In the following pages I have not attempted to avoid saying over again much that in substance has been said already, and doubtless better, by others: by Mr. Matthew Arnold and Mr. Palgrave especially. I doubt not but they will forgive me; and at the same time I hope to have contributed something of my own towards a fuller understanding both of Keats's art and life.

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KEATS.

CHAPTER I.

Birth and Parentage.—School Life at Enfield.—Life as Surgeon's Apprentice at Edmonton.—Awakening to Poetry.—Life as Hospital Student in London [1795—1817].

SCIENCE may one day ascertain the laws of distribution and descent which govern the births of genius, but in the meantime a birth like that of Keats presents to the ordinary mind a striking instance of nature's inscrutability. If we consider the other chief poets of the time, we can commonly recognize either some strain of power in their blood or some strong inspiring influence in the scenery and traditions of their home. Thus we see Scott prepared alike by his origin, associations, and circumstances to be the "minstrel of his clan" and poet of the romance of the border wilds; while the spirit of the Cumbrian hills, and the temper of the generations bred among them, speak naturally through the lips of Wordsworth. Byron seems inspired in literature by demons of the same froward brood that had urged others of his lineage through lives of adventure or of crime. But Keats, with instincts and faculties more purely poetical than any of these, was paradoxically born in a dull and middling walk of English city life; and "if by traduction came his mind"—to quote

Dryden with a difference—it was through channels too obscure for us to trace. His father, Thomas Keats, was a west-country lad who came young to London, and while still under twenty held the place of head ostler in a livery-stable kept by a Mr. John Jennings in Finsbury. Presently he married his employer's daughter, Frances Jennings; and Mr. Jennings, who was a man of substance, retiring about the same time to live in the country, at Ponder's End, left the management of the business in the hands of his son-in-law. The young couple lived at the stable, at the sign of the Swan-and-Hoop, Finsbury Pavement, facing the then open space of Lower Moorfields. Here their eldest child, the poet JOHN KEATS, was born prematurely on either the 29th or 31st of October, 1795. A second son, named George, followed on February 28, 1797; a third, Tom, on November 18, 1799; a fourth, Edward, who died in infancy, on April 28, 1801; and on the 3d of June, 1803, a daughter, Frances Mary. In the meantime the family had moved from the stable to a house in Craven Street, City Road, half a mile farther north.¹

In the gifts and temperament of Keats we shall find much that seems characteristic of the Celtic rather than the English nature. Whether he really had any of that blood in his veins we cannot tell. His father was a native either of Devon or of Cornwall,² and his mother's name, Jennings, is common in, but not peculiar to, Wales. There our evidence ends, and all that we know further of his parents is that they were certainly not quite ordinary people. Thomas Keats was noticed in his life-time as a man of intelligence and conduct—"of so remarkably fine a common sense and native respectability," writes Cowden Clarke, in whose father's school the poet and his brothers were

¹ See Appendix, p. 219:

² *Ibid.*

brought up, "that I perfectly remember the warm terms in which his demeanour used to be canvassed by my parents after he had been to visit his boys." It is added that he resembled his illustrious son in person and feature, being of small stature and lively energetic countenance, with brown hair and hazel eyes. Of his wife, the poet's mother, we learn more vaguely that she was "tall, of good figure, with large oval face, and sensible deportment;" and again, that she was a lively, clever, impulsive woman, passionately fond of amusement, and supposed to have hastened the birth of her eldest child by some imprudence. Her second son, George, wrote in after life of her and of her family as follows: "My grandfather [Mr. Jennings] was very well off, as his will shows, and but that he was extremely generous and gullible would have been affluent. I have heard my grandmother speak with enthusiasm of his excellencies, and Mr. Abbey used to say that he never saw a woman of the talents and sense of my grandmother, except my mother." And elsewhere: "My mother I distinctly remember, she resembled John very much in the face, was extremely fond of him, and humoured him in every whim, of which he had not a few, she was a most excellent and affectionate parent, and as I thought a woman of uncommon talents."

The mother's passion for her firstborn son was devotedly returned by him. Once as a young child, when she was ordered to be left quiet during an illness, he is said to have insisted on keeping watch at her door with an old sword, and allowing no one to go in. Haydon, an artist who loved to lay his colours thick, gives this anecdote of the sword a different turn: "He was, when an infant, a most violent and ungovernable child. At five years of age or thereabouts, he once got hold of a naked sword, and shut-

ting the door swore nobody should go out. His mother wanted to do so, but he threatened her so furiously she began to cry, and was obliged to wait till somebody through the window saw her position and came to the rescue." Another trait of the poet's childhood, mentioned also by Haydon, on the authority of a gammer who had known him from his birth, is that when he was first learning to speak, instead of answering sensibly, he had a trick of making a rhyme to the last word people said and then laughing.

The parents were ambitious for their boys, and would have liked to send them to Harrow, but thinking this beyond their means, chose the school kept by the Rev. John Clarke at Enfield. The brothers of Mrs. Keats had been educated here, and the school was one of good repute, and of exceptionally pleasant aspect and surroundings. Traces of its ancient forest character lingered long, and indeed linger yet, about the neighbourhood of the picturesque small suburban town of Enfield, and the district was one especially affected by City men of fortune for their homes. The school-house occupied by Mr. Clarke had been originally built for a rich West-India merchant, in the finest style of early Georgian classic architecture, and stood in a pleasant and spacious garden at the lower end of the town. When, years afterwards, the site was used for a railway station, the old house was for some time allowed to stand; but later it was taken down, and the façade, with its fine proportions and rich ornaments in moulded brick, was transported to the South Kensington Museum as a choice example of the style.

Not long after Keats had been put to school he lost his father, who was killed by a fall from his horse as he rode home at night from Southgate. This was on the 16th of

April, 1804. Within twelve months his mother had put off her weeds and taken a second husband—one William Rawlings, described as “of Moorgate, in the city of London, stable-keeper,” presumably, therefore, the successor of her first husband in the management of her father’s business. This marriage turned out unhappily. It was soon followed by a separation, and Mrs. Rawlings went with her children to live at Edmonton, in the house of her mother, Mrs. Jennings, who was just about this time left a widow.¹ In the correspondence of the Keats brothers after they were grown up no mention is ever made of their step-father, of whom, after the separation, the family seem to have lost all knowledge. The household in Church Street, Edmonton, was well enough provided for, Mr. Jennings having left a fortune of over £13,000, of which, in addition to other legacies, he bequeathed a capital yielding £200 a year to his widow absolutely; one yielding £50 a year to his daughter Frances Rawlings, with reversion to her Keats children after her death; and £1000 to be separately held in trust for the said children, and divided among them on their coming of age.² Between this home, then, and the neighbouring Enfield school, where he was in due time joined by his younger brothers, the next four or five years of Keats’s boyhood (1806–1810) were passed in sufficient comfort and pleasantness. He did not live to attain the years, or the success, of men who write their reminiscences; and almost the only recollections he has left of his own early days refer to holiday times in his grandmother’s house at Edmonton. They are conveyed in some rhymes which he wrote years afterwards, by way of foolishness, to amuse his young sister, and testify

¹ John Jennings died March 8, 1805.

² *Rawlings v. Jennings*. See below, p. 137, and Appendix, p. 219.

to a partiality, common also to little boys not of genius, for dabbling by the brookside—

“In spite
Of the might
Of the Maid,
Nor afraid
Of his granny-good”—

and for keeping small fishes in tubs.

If we learn little of Keats's early days from his own lips, we have sufficient testimony as to the impression which he made on his school companions; which was that of a boy all spirit and generosity, vehement both in tears and laughter, handsome, passionate, pugnacious, placable, lovable, a natural leader and champion among his fellows. But beneath this bright and mettlesome outside there lay deep in his nature, even from the first, a strain of painful sensibility, making him subject to moods of unreasonable suspicion and self-tormenting melancholy. These he was accustomed to conceal from all except his brothers, between whom and himself there existed the very closest of fraternal ties. George, the second brother, had all John's spirit of manliness and honour, with a less impulsive disposition and a cooler blood. From a boy he was the bigger and stronger of the two; and at school found himself continually involved in fights for, and not unfrequently with, his small, indomitably fiery elder brother. Tom, the youngest, was always delicate, and an object of protecting care as well as the warmest affection to the other two. The singularly strong family sentiment that united the three brothers extended naturally also to their sister, then a child; and in a more remote and ideal fashion to their uncle by the mother's side, Captain Midgley John Jen-

nings, a tall navy officer who had served with some distinction under Duncan at Camperdown, and who impressed the imagination of the boys, in those days of militant British valour by land and sea, as a model of manly prowess.¹ It may be remembered that there was a much more distinguished naval hero of the time who bore their own name—the gallant Admiral Sir Richard Godwin Keats of the *Superb*, afterwards governor of Greenwich Hospital; and he, like their father, came from the west-country, being the son of a Bideford clergyman. But it seems clear that the family of our Keats claimed no connection with that of the Admiral.

Here are some of George Keats's recollections, written after the death of his elder brother, and referring partly to their school-days and partly to John's character after he was grown up :

"I loved him from boyhood, even when he wronged me, for the goodness of his heart and the nobleness of his spirit. Before we left school we quarrelled often and fought fiercely, and I can safely say, and my schoolfellows will bear witness, that John's temper was the cause of all, still we were more attached than brothers ever are.

"From the time we were boys at school, where we loved, jangled, and fought alternately, until we separated in 1818, I in a great measure relieved him by continual sympathy, explanation, and inexhaustible spirits and good humour, from many a bitter fit of hypochondriasm. He avoided teasing any one with his miseries but Tom and myself, and often asked our forgiveness; venting and discussing them gave him relief."

Let us turn now from these honest and warm brotherly reminiscences to their confirmation in the words of two of Keats's school-friends; and first in those of his junior, Edward Holmes, afterwards author of the *Life of Mozart*:

¹ Captain Jennings died October 8, 1808.

"Keats was in childhood not attached to books. His *penchant* was for fighting. He would fight any one—morning, noon, and night, his brother among the rest. It was meat and drink to him. . . . His favourites were few; after they were known to fight readily he seemed to prefer them for a sort of grotesque and buffoon humour. . . . He was a boy whom any one, from his extraordinary vivacity and personal beauty, might easily fancy would become great—but rather in some military capacity than in literature. You will remark that this taste came out rather suddenly and unexpectedly. . . . In all active exercises he excelled. The generosity and daring of his character, with the extreme beauty and animation of his face, made, I remember, an impression on me; and being some years his junior, I was obliged to woo his friendship, in which I succeeded, but not till I had fought several battles. This violence and vehemence—this pugnacity and generosity of disposition—in passions of tears or outrageous fits of laughter—always in extremes—will help to paint Keats in his boyhood. Associated as they were with an extraordinary beauty of person and expression, these qualities captivated the boys, and no one was more popular."¹

Entirely to the same effect is the account of Keats given by a school friend seven or eight years older than himself, to whose appreciation and encouragement the world most likely owes it that he first ventured into poetry. This was the son of the master, Charles Cowden Clarke, who towards the close of a long life, during which he had deserved well of literature in more ways than one, wrote retrospectively of Keats:

"He was a favourite with all. Not the less beloved was he for having a highly pugnacious spirit, which when roused was one of the most picturesque exhibitions—off the stage—I ever saw. . . . Upon one occasion, when an usher, on account of some impertinent behaviour, had boxed his brother Tom's ears, John rushed up, put himself into the received posture of offence, and, it was said, struck the usher—who could, so to say, have put him in his pocket. His passion at

¹ Houghton MSS.

times was almost ungovernable ; and his brother George, being considerably the taller and stronger, used frequently to hold him down by main force, laughing when John was 'in one of his moods,' and was endeavouring to beat him. It was all, however, a whisp-of-straw conflagration ; for he had an intensely tender affection for his brothers, and proved it upon the most trying occasions. He was not merely the favourite of all, like a pet prize-fighter, for his terrier courage ; but his highmindedness, his utter unconsciousness of a mean motive, his placability, his generosity, wrought so general a feeling in his behalf that I never heard a word of disapproval from any one, superior or equal, who had known him."

The same excellent witness records, in agreement with the last, that in his earlier school-days Keats showed no particular signs of an intellectual bent, though always orderly and methodical in what he did. But during his last few terms, that is, in his fourteenth and fifteenth years, all the energies of his nature turned to study. He became suddenly and completely absorbed in reading, and would be continually at work before school-time in the morning and during play-hours in the afternoon ; could hardly be induced to join the school games, and never willingly had a book out of his hand. At this time he won easily all the literature prizes of the school, and, in addition to his proper work, imposed on himself such voluntary tasks as the translation of the whole *Æneid* in prose. He devoured all the books of history, travel, and fiction in the school library, and was forever borrowing more from the friend who tells the story. "In my mind's eye I now see him at supper, sitting back on the form from the table, holding the folio volume of Burnet's 'History of his Own Time' between himself and the table, eating his meal from beyond it. This work, and Leigh Hunt's 'Examiner'—which my father took in, and I used to lend to Keats—no doubt laid the foundation of his love of civil and religious liberty."

But the books which Keats read with the greatest eagerness of all were books of ancient mythology, and he seemed literally to learn by heart the contents of Tooke's *Pantheon*, Lempriere's *Dictionary*, and the school abridgment by Tindal of Spence's *Polymetis*—the first the most foolish and dull, the last the most scholarly and polite, of the various handbooks in which the ancient fables were presented in those days to the apprehension of youth.

Trouble fell upon Keats in the midst of these ardent studies of his latter school-days. His mother had been for some time in failing health. First she was disabled by chronic rheumatism, and at last fell into a rapid consumption, which carried her off in February, 1810. We are told with what devotion her eldest boy attended her sick bed,—“he sat up whole nights with her in a great chair, would suffer nobody to give her medicine, or even cook her food, but himself, and read novels to her in her intervals of ease”—and how bitterly he mourned for her when she was gone—“he gave way to such impassioned and prolonged grief (hiding himself in a nook under the master's desk) as awakened the liveliest pity and sympathy in all who saw him.” In the July following, Mrs. Jennings, being desirous to make the best provision she could for her orphan grandchildren, “in consideration of the natural love and affection which she had for them,” executed a deed putting them under the care of two guardians, to whom she made over, to be held in trust for their benefit from the date of the instrument, the chief part of the property which she derived from her late husband under his will.¹ The guardians were Mr. Rowland Sandell, merchant, and Mr. Richard Abbey, a wholesale tea-dealer in Pancras Lane. Mrs. Jennings sur-

¹ *Rawlings v. Jennings*. See Appendix, p. 219.

vived the execution of this deed more than four years,¹ but Mr. Abbey, with the consent of his co-trustee, seems at once to have taken up all the responsibilities of the trust. Under his authority John Keats was withdrawn from school at the close of this same year 1810, when he was just fifteen, and made to put on harness for the practical work of life. With no opposition, so far as we learn, on his own part, he was bound apprentice for a term of five years to a surgeon at Edmonton named Hammond. The only picture we have of him in this capacity has been left by R. H. Horne, the author of *Orion*, who came as a small boy to the Enfield school just after Keats had left it. One day in winter Mr. Hammond had driven over to attend the school, and Keats with him. Keats was standing with his head sunk in a brown study, holding the horse, when some of the boys, who knew his school reputation for pugnacity, dared Horne to throw a snowball at him, which Horne did, hitting Keats in the back, and then taking headlong to his heels, to his surprise got off scot free.² Keats during his apprenticeship used on his own account to be often to and fro between the Edmonton surgery and the Enfield school. His newly awakened passion for the pleasures of literature and the imagination was not to be stifled, and whenever he could spare time from his work, he plunged back into his school occupations of reading and translating. He finished at this time his translation of the *Æneid*, and was in the habit of walking over to Enfield once a week or oftener to see his friend Cowden Clarke, and to exchange books and "travel in

¹ Mrs. Alice Jennings was buried at St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, December 19, 1814, aged 78. (Communication from the Rev. J. W. Pratt, M.A.)

² I owe this anecdote to Mr. Gosse, who had it direct from Horne.

the realms of gold" with him. In summer weather the two would sit in a shady arbour in the old school garden, the elder reading poetry to the younger, and enjoying his looks and exclamations of enthusiasm. On a momentous day for Keats, Cowden Clarke introduced him for the first time to Spenser, reading him the *Epithalamium* in the afternoon, and lending him the *Faerie Queene* to take away the same evening. It has been said, and truly, that no one who has not had the good fortune to be attracted to that poem in boyhood can ever completely enjoy it. The maturer student, appreciate as he may its inexhaustible beauties and noble temper, can hardly fail to be in some degree put out by its arbitrary forms of rhyme and diction, and wearied by its melodious redundance, he will perceive the perplexity and discontinuousness of the allegory, and the absence of real and breathing humanity, even the failure at times of clearness of vision and strength of grasp, amidst all that luxuriance of decorative and symbolic invention, and prodigality of romantic incident and detail. It is otherwise with the uncritical faculties and greedy apprehension of boyhood. For them there is no poetical revelation like the *Faerie Queene*, no pleasure equal to that of floating for the first time along that ever-buoyant stream of verse, by those shores and forests of enchantment, glades and wildernesses alive with glancing figures of knight and lady, oppressor and champion, mage and Saracen—with masque and combat, pursuit and rescue, the chivalrous shapes and hazards of the woodland, and beauty triumphant or in distress. Through the new world thus opened to him Keats went ranging with delight: "ramping" is Cowden Clarke's word; he showed, moreover, his own instinct for the poetical art by fastening with critical enthusiasm on epithets of special felicity or power.

For instance, says his friend, "he hoisted himself up, and looked burly and dominant, as he said, 'What an image that is—*sea-shouldering whales!*'" Spenser has been often proved not only a great awakener of the love of poetry in youth, but a great fertilizer of the germs of original poetical power where they exist; and Charles Brown, the most intimate friend of Keats during two later years of his life, states positively that it was to the inspiration of the *Faerie Queene* that his first notion of attempting to write was due. "Though born to be a poet, he was ignorant of his birthright until he had completed his eighteenth year. It was the *Faerie Queene* that awakened his genius. In Spenser's fairy-land he was enchanted, breathed in a new world, and became another being; till, enamoured of the stanza, he attempted to imitate it, and succeeded. This account of the sudden development of his poetic powers I first received from his brothers, and afterwards from himself. This, his earliest attempt, the 'Imitation of Spenser,' is in his first volume of poems, and it is peculiarly interesting to those acquainted with his history."¹ Cowden Clarke places the attempt two years earlier, but his memory for dates was, as he owns, the vaguest, and we may fairly assume him to have been mistaken.

After he had thus first become conscious within himself of the impulse of poetical composition, Keats went on writing occasional sonnets and other verses; secretly and shyly at first like all young poets; at least it was not until two years later, in the spring of 1815, that he showed anything he had written to his friend and confidant, Cowden Clarke. In the meantime a change had taken place in his way of life. In the summer or autumn of 1814, more

¹ Houghton MSS.

than a year before the expiration of his term of apprenticeship, he had quarrelled with Mr. Hammond and left him. The cause of their quarrel is not known, and Keats's own single allusion to it is when, once afterwards, speaking of the periodical change and renewal of the bodily tissues, he says, "Seven years ago it was not this hand which clenched itself at Hammond." It seems unlikely that the cause was any neglect of duty on the part of the poet-apprentice, who was not devoid of thoroughness and resolution in the performance even of uncongenial tasks. At all events Mr. Hammond allowed the indentures to be cancelled, and Keats, being now nearly nineteen years of age, went to live in London, and continue the study of his profession as a student at the hospitals (then for teaching purposes united) of St. Thomas's and Guy's. For the first winter and spring after leaving Edmonton he lodged alone at 8 Dean Street, Borough, and then for about a year, in company with some fellow-students, over a tallow-chandler's shop in St. Thomas's Street. Thence he went, in the summer of 1816, to join his brothers in lodgings in the Poultry, over a passage leading to the Queen's Head tavern. In the spring of 1817 they all three moved for a short time to 76 Cheapside. Between these several addresses in London Keats spent a period of about two years and a half, from the date (which is not precisely fixed) of his leaving Edmonton, in 1814, until April, 1817.

It was in this interval, from his nineteenth to his twenty-second year, that Keats gave way gradually to his growing passion for poetry. At first he seems to have worked steadily enough along the lines which others had marked out for him. His chief reputation, indeed, among his fellow-students was that of a "cheerful, crotchety rhymester," much given to scribbling doggerel verses in his friends'

note-books.¹ But I have before me the MS. book in which he took down his own notes of a course, or at least the beginning of a course, of lectures on anatomy, and they are not those of a lax or inaccurate student. The only signs of a wandering mind occur on the margins of one or two pages, in the shape of sketches (rather prettily touched) of pansies and other flowers; but the notes themselves are both full and close, as far as they go. Poetry had indeed already become Keats's chief interest, but it is clear, at the same time, that he attended the hospitals and did his work regularly, acquiring a fairly solid knowledge, both theoretical and practical, of the rudiments of medical and surgical science, so that he was always afterwards able to speak on such subjects with a certain mastery. On the 26th of July, 1815, he passed with credit his examination as licentiate at Apothecaries' Hall. He was appointed a dresser at Guy's under Mr. Lucas on the 3d of March, 1816, and the operations which he performed or assisted in are said to have proved him no bungler. But his heart was not in the work. Its scientific part he could not feel to be a satisfying occupation for his thoughts; he knew nothing of that passion of philosophical curiosity in the mechanism and mysteries of the human frame which by turns attracted Coleridge and Shelley towards the study of medicine. The practical responsibilities of the profession at the same time weighed upon him, and he was conscious of a kind of absent, uneasy wonder at his own skill. Voices and visions that he could not resist were luring his spirit

¹ A specimen of such scribble, in the shape of a fragment of romance narrative, composed in the sham Old-English of Rowley, and in prose, not verse, will be found in *The Philosophy of Mystery*, by W. C. Dendy (London, 1841), p. 99, and another, preserved by Mr. H. Stephens, in the *Poetical Works*, ed. Forman (1 vol., 1884), p. 558.

along other paths, and once when Cowden Clarke asked him about his prospects and feelings in regard to his profession, he frankly declared his own sense of his unfitness for it, with reasons such as this, that "the other day, during the lecture, there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray; and I was off with them to Oberon and fairy-land." "My last operation," he once told Brown, "was the opening of a man's temporal artery. I did it with the utmost nicety, but reflecting on what passed through my mind at the time, my dexterity seemed a miracle, and I never took up the lancet again."

Keats at the same time was forming intimacies with other young men of literary tastes and occupations. His verses were beginning to be no longer written with a boy's secrecy, but freely addressed to and passed round among his friends; some of them attracted the notice and warm approval of writers of acknowledged mark and standing, and with their encouragement he had, about the time of his coming of age (that is in the winter of 1816-17), conceived the purpose of devoting himself to a literary life. We are not told what measure of opposition he encountered on the point from Mr. Abbey, though there is evidence that he encountered some.¹ Probably that gentleman regarded the poetical aspirations of his ward as mere symptoms of a boyish fever which experience would quickly cure. There was always a certain lack of cordiality in his relations with the three brothers as they grew up. He gave places in his counting-house successively to George and Tom as they left school, but they both quitted him after a while; George, who had his full share of the family pride, on account of slights experienced or imagined at

¹ See Appendix, p. 220.

the hands of a junior partner; Tom in consequence of a settled infirmity of health which early disabled him for the practical work of life. Mr. Abbey continued to manage the money matters of the Keats family — unskilfully enough, as will appear—and to do his duty by them as he understood it. Between him and John Keats there was never any formal quarrel. But that young brilliant spirit could hardly have expected a responsible tea-dealer's approval when he yielded himself to the influences now to be described.

CHAPTER II.

Particulars of Early Life in London.—Friendships and First Poems.—Henry Stephens.—Felton Mathew.—Cowden Clarke.—Leigh Hunt: his literary and personal influence.—John Hamilton Reynolds.—James Rice.—Cornelius Webb.—Shelley.—Haydon.—Joseph Severn.—Charles Wells.—Other acquaintances.—Determination to publish. [1814—April, 1817.]

WHEN Keats moved from Dean Street to St. Thomas's Street in the summer of 1815, he at first occupied a joint sitting-room with two senior students, to the care of one of whom he had been recommended by Astley Cooper.¹ When they left he arranged to live in the same house with two other students of his own age named George Wilson Mackereth and Henry Stephens. The latter, who was afterwards a physician of repute near St. Albans, and later at Finchley, has left some interesting reminiscences of the time.² "He attended lectures," says Mr. Stephens of Keats, "and went through the usual routine, but he had no desire to excel in that pursuit. . . . Poetry was to his mind the zenith of all his aspirations—the only thing worthy the attention of superior minds—so he thought—all other pursuits were mean and tame. . . . It may readily be imagined that this feeling was accompanied by a good

¹ See C. L. Feltoe, *Memorials of J. F. South* (London, 1884), p. 81.

² Houghton MSS. See also Dr. B. W. Richardson in the *Asclepiad*, vol. i., p. 134.

deal of pride and some conceit, and that amongst mere medical students he would walk and talk as one of the gods might be supposed to do when mingling with mortals." On the whole, it seems "Little Keats" was popular among his fellow-students, although subject to occasional teasing on account of his pride, his poetry, and even his birth as the son of a stable-keeper. Mr. Stephens goes on to tell how he himself and a student of St. Bartholomew's, a merry fellow called Newmarch, having some tincture of poetry, were singled out as companions by Keats, with whom they used to discuss and compare verses, Keats taking always the tone of authority, and generally disagreeing with their tastes. He despised Pope and admired Byron, but delighted especially in Spenser, caring more in poetry for the beauty of imagery, description, and simile than for the interest of action or passion. Newmarch used sometimes to laugh at Keats and his flights—to the indignation of his brothers, who came often to see him, and treated him as a person to be exalted, and destined to exalt the family name. "Questions of poetry apart," continues Mr. Stephens, "he was habitually gentle and pleasant, and in his life steady and well-behaved—his absolute devotion to poetry prevented his having any other taste or indulging in any vice." Another companion of Keats's early London days who sympathized with his literary tastes was a certain George Felton Mathew, the son of a tradesman whose family showed the young medical student some hospitality. "Keats and I," wrote, in 1848, Mr. Mathew—then a supernumerary official on the Poor-Law Board, struggling meekly under the combined strain of a precarious income, a family of twelve children, and a turn for the interpretation of prophecy—"Keats and I, though about the same age, and both inclined to literature, were in many

respects as different as two individuals could be. He enjoyed good health—a fine flow of animal spirits—was fond of company—could amuse himself admirably with the frivolities of life—and had great confidence in himself. I, on the other hand, was languid and melancholy—fond of repose—thoughtful beyond my years—and diffident to the last degree. . . . He was of the sceptical and republican school—an advocate for the innovations which were making progress in his time—a fault-finder with everything established. I, on the other hand, hated controversy and dispute—dreaded discord and disorder”¹—and Keats, our good Mr. Timorous farther testifies, was very kind and amiable, always ready to apologize for shocking him. As to his poetical predilections, the impression left on Mr. Mathew quite corresponds with that recorded by Mr. Stephens: “He admired more the external decorations than felt the deep emotions of the Muse. He delighted in leading you through the mazes of elaborate description, but was less conscious of the sublime and the pathetic. He used to spend many evenings in reading to me, but I never observed the tears nor the broken voice which are indicative of extreme sensibility.”

The exact order and chronology of Keats’s own first efforts in poetry it is difficult to trace. They were certainly neither precocious nor particularly promising. The circumstantial account of Brown above quoted compels us to regard the lines *In Imitation of Spenser* as the earliest of all, and as written at Edmonton about the end of 1813 or beginning of 1814. They are correct and melodious, and contain few of those archaic or experimental eccentricities of diction which we shall find abounding a little later in Keats’s work. Although, indeed, the poets whom Keats

¹ Houghton MSS.

loved the best, both first and last, were those of the Elizabethan age, it is clear that his own earliest verses were modelled timidly on the work of writers nearer his own time. His professedly Spenserian lines resemble not so much Spenser as later writers who had written in his measure, and of these not the latest, Byron,¹ but rather such milder minstrels as Shenstone, Thomson, and Beattie, or most of all, perhaps, the sentimental Irish poetess Mrs. Tighe, whose *Psyche* had become very popular since her death, and by its richness of imagery, and flowing and musical versification, takes a place, now too little recognized, among the pieces preluding the romantic movement of the time. That Keats was familiar with this lady's work is proved by his allusion to it in the lines, themselves very youthfully turned in the tripping manner of Tom Moore, which he addressed about this time to some ladies who had sent him a present of a shell. His two elegiac stanzas *On Death*, assigned by George Keats to the year 1814, are quite in an eighteenth-century style and vein of moralizing. Equally so is the address *To Hope* of February, 1815, with its "relentless fair" and its personified abstractions, "fair Cheerfulness," "Disappointment, parent of Despair," "that fiend Despondence," and the rest. And once more in the ode *To Apollo* of the same date, the voice with which this young singer celebrates his Elizabethan masters is an echo not of their own voice but rather of Gray's :

"Thou biddest Shakspeare wave his hand,
And quickly forward spring

¹ What, for instance, can be less Spenserian, and at the same time less Byronic, than—

"For sure so fair a place was never seen
Of all that ever charm'd romantic eye?"

The Passions—a terrific band—
And each vibrates the string
That with its tyrant temper best accords,
While from their Master's lips pour forth the inspiring words.
A silver trumpet Spenser blows,
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
From a virgin chorus flows
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.
'Tis still! Wild warblings from the Æolian lyre
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire."

The pieces above cited are all among the earliest of Keats's work, written either at Edmonton or during the first year of his life in London. To the same class no doubt belongs the inexpert and boyish, almost girlish, sentimental sonnet *To Byron*, and probably that also, which is but a degree better, *To Chatterton* (both only posthumously printed). The more firmly handled but still mediocre sonnet on Leigh Hunt's release from prison brings us again to a fixed date and a recorded occasion in the young poet's life. It was on either the 2d or the 3d of February, 1815, that the brothers Hunt were discharged, after serving out the term of imprisonment to which they had been condemned on the charge of libelling the Prince Regent two years before. Young Cowden Clarke, like so many other friends of letters and of liberty, had gone to offer his respects to Leigh Hunt in Surrey jail, and the acquaintance thus begun had warmed quickly into friendship. Within a few days of Hunt's release, Clarke walked in from Enfield to call on him (presumably at the lodging he occupied at this time in the Edgeware Road). On his return Clarke met Keats, who walked part of the way home with him, and as they parted, says Clarke, "he turned and gave me the sonnet entitled *Written on the day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left prison*. This I feel to be the first proof I had

received of his having committed himself in verse; and how clearly do I recollect the conscious look and hesitation with which he offered it! There are some momentary glances by beloved friends that fade only with life."

Not long afterwards Cowden Clarke left Enfield, and came to settle in London. Keats found him out in his lodgings at Clerkenwell, and the two were soon meeting as often, and reading together as eagerly, as ever. One of the first books they attacked was a borrowed folio copy of Chapman's *Homer*. After a night's enthusiastic study, Clarke found, when he came down to breakfast the next morning, that Keats, who had only left him in the small hours, had already had time to compose and send him from the Borough the sonnet, now so famous as to be almost hackneyed, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*:

"Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
 Round many Western islands have I been
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told,
 That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne:
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
 When a new planet swims into his ken;
 Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
 He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
 Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

The date of the incident cannot be precisely fixed, but it was when nights were short in the summer of 1815. The seventh line of the sonnet is an after-thought: in the original copy sent to Cowden Clarke it stood more baldly,

"Yet could I never tell what men might mean." Keats here for the first time approves himself a poet indeed. The concluding sestet is almost unsurpassed, nor can there be a finer instance of the alchemy of genius than the image of the explorer, wherein a stray reminiscence of school-boy reading (with a mistake, it seems, as to the name, which should be Balboa and not Cortez, but what does it matter?) is converted into the perfection of appropriate poetry.

One of the next services which the ever zealous and affectionate Cowden Clarke did his young friend was to make him personally known to Leigh Hunt. The acquaintance carried with it in the sequel some disadvantages and even penalties, but at first was a source of unmixed encouragement and pleasure. It is impossible rightly to understand the career of Keats if we fail to realize the various modes in which it was affected by his intercourse with Hunt. The latter was the elder of the two by eleven years. He was the son, by marriage with an American wife, of an eloquent and elegant, self-indulgent and thriftless fashionable preacher of West Indian origin who had chiefly exercised his vocation in the northern suburbs of London. Leigh Hunt was brought up at Christ's Hospital about a dozen years later than Lamb and Coleridge, and gained at sixteen some slight degree of precocious literary reputation with a volume of juvenile poems. A few years later he came into notice as a theatrical critic, being then a clerk in the War Office, an occupation which he abandoned at twenty-four (in 1808) in order to join his brother, John Hunt, in the conduct of the *Examiner* newspaper. For five years the managers of that journal helped to fight the losing battle of liberalism, in those days of Eldon and of Castle-reagh, with a dexterous brisk audacity, and a perfect sin-

cerity, if not profoundness, of conviction. At last they were caught tripping, and condemned to two years' imprisonment for strictures ruled libellous, and really stinging as well as just, on the character and person of the Prince Regent. Leigh Hunt bore himself in his captivity with cheerful fortitude, and issued from it a sort of hero. Liberal statesmen, philosophers, and writers pressed to offer him their sympathy and society in prison, and his engaging presence and affluence of genial conversation charmed all who were brought in contact with him. Tall, straight, slender, and vivacious, with curly black hair, bright coal-black eyes, and "nose of taste," Leigh Hunt was ever one of the most winning of companions, full of kindly smiles and jests, of reading, gaiety, and ideas, with an infinity of pleasant things to say of his own, yet the most sympathetic and deferential of listeners. If in some matters he was far too easy, and especially in that of money obligations, which he shrunk neither from receiving nor conferring—only circumstances made him nearly always a receiver—still men of sterner fibre than Hunt have more lightly abandoned graver convictions than his, and been far less ready to suffer for what they believed. Liberals could not but contrast his smiling steadfastness under persecution with the apostasy, as in the heat of the hour they considered it, of Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. In domestic life no man was more amiable and devoted under difficulties, and none was better loved by his friends, or requited them, so far as the depth of his nature went, with a truer warmth and loyalty. His literary industry was incessant, hardly second to that of Southey himself. He had the liveliest faculty of enjoyment, coupled with a singular quickness of intellectual apprehension for the points and qualities of what he enjoyed; and for the gentler

pleasures, graces, and luxuries (to use a word he loved) of literature he is the most accomplished of guides and interpreters. His manner in criticism has at its best an easy penetration and flowing unobtrusive felicity most remote from those faults to which Coleridge and De Quincey, with their more philosophic powers and method, were subject, the faults of pedantry and effort. The infirmity of Leigh Hunt's style is of an opposite kind. "Incomparable," according to Lamb's well-known phrase, "as a fire-side companion," it was his misfortune to carry too much of the fire-side tone into literature, and to affect both in prose and verse, but much more in the latter, an air of chatty familiarity and ease which passes too easily into Cockney pertness.

A combination of accidents, political, personal, and literary, caused this writer of amiable memory and second-rate powers to exercise, about the time of which we are writing, a determining influence both on the work and the fortunes of stronger men. And first of his influence on their work. He was as enthusiastic a student of "our earlier and nobler school of poetry" as Coleridge or Lamb, and though he had more appreciation than they of the characteristic excellences of the "French school," the school of polished artifice and restraint which had come in since Dryden, he was not less bent on its overthrow, and on the return of English poetry to the paths of nature and freedom. But he had his own conception of the manner in which this return should be effected. He did not admit that Wordsworth with his rustic simplicities and his reclusive philosophy had solved the problem. "It was his intention," he wrote in prison, "by the beginning of next year to bring out a piece of some length . . . in which he would attempt to reduce to practice his own ideas of what

is natural in style, and of the various and legitimate harmony of the English heroic." The result of this intention was the *Story of Rimini*, begun before his prosecution and published a year after his release, in February or March, 1816. "With the endeavour," so he repeated himself in the preface, "to recur to a freer spirit of versification, I have joined one of still greater importance—that of having a free and idiomatic cast of language."

In versification Hunt's aim was to bring back into use the earlier form of the rhymed English decasyllabic or "heroic" couplet. The innovating poets of the time had abandoned this form of verse (Wordsworth and Coleridge using it only in their earliest efforts, before 1796); while the others who still employed it, as Campbell, Rogers, Crabbe, and Byron, adhered, each in his manner, to the isolated couplet and hammering rhymes with which the English ear had been for more than a century exclusively familiar. The two contrasted systems of handling the measure may best be understood if we compare the rhythm of a poem written in it to one of those designs in hangings or wall-papers which are made up of two different patterns in combination: a rigid or geometrical ground pattern, with a second flowing or free pattern winding in and out of it. The regular or ground pattern, dividing the field into even spaces, will stand for the fixed or strictly metrical divisions of the verse into equal pairs of rhyming lines; while the flowing or free pattern stands for its other divisions—dependent not on metre but on the sense—into clauses and periods of variable length and structure. Under the older system of versification the sentence or period had been allowed to follow its own laws, with a movement untrammelled by that of the metre; and the beauty of the result depended upon the skill and feeling

with which this free element of the pattern was made to play about and interweave itself with the fixed element, the flow and divisions of the sentence now crossing and now coinciding with those of the metre, the sense now drawing attention to the rhyme and now withholding it. For examples of this system and of its charm we have only to turn at random to Chaucer :

“I-clothed was sche fresh for to devyse.
 Hir yelwe hair was browded in a tresse,
 Byhynde her bak, a yerdë long, I gesse,
 And in the garden as the sonne upriste
 She walketh up and down, and as hir liste
 She gathereth floures, party white and reeda,
 To make a sotil garland for here heede,
 And as an aungel hevenlyche sche song.”

Chaucer's conception of the measure prevails throughout the Elizabethan age, but not exclusively or uniformly. Some poets are more inobservant of the metrical division than he, and keep the movement of their periods as independent of it as possible, closing a sentence anywhere rather than with the close of the couplet, and making use constantly of the *enjambement*, or way of letting the sense flow over from one line to another, without pause or emphasis on the rhyme-word. Others show an opposite tendency, especially in epigrammatic or sententious passages, to clip their sentences to the pattern of the metre, fitting single propositions into single lines or couplets, and letting the stress fall regularly on the rhyme. This principle gradually gained ground during the seventeenth century, as every one knows, and prevails strongly in the work of Dryden. But Dryden has two methods which he freely employs for varying the monotony of his couplets : in se-

rious narrative or didactic verse, the use of the triplet and the Alexandrine, thus:

“Full bowls of wine, of honey, milk, and blood
Were poured upon the pile of burning wood,
And hissing flames receive, and hungry lick the food.
Then thrice the mounted squadrons ride around
The fire, and Arcite’s name they thrice resound:
‘Hail and farewell,’ they shouted thrice amain,
Thrice facing to the left, and thrice they turned again—”

and in lively colloquial verse the use, not uncommon also with the Elizabethans, of disyllabic rhymes:

“I come, kind gentlemen, strange news to tell ye;
I am the ghost of poor departed Nelly.
Sweet ladies, be not frighted; I’ll be civil;
I’m what I was, a little harmless devil.”

In the hands of Pope, the poetical legislator of the following century, these expedients are discarded, and the fixed and purely metrical element in the design is suffered to regulate and control the other element entirely. The sentence-structure loses its freedom, and periods and clauses, instead of being allowed to develop themselves at their ease, are compelled mechanically to coincide with and repeat the metrical divisions of the verse. To take a famous instance, and from a passage not sententious, but fanciful and discursive:

“Some in the fields of purest æther play,
And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.
Some guide the course of wand’ring orbs on high,
Or roll the planets through the boundless sky.
Some less refined, beneath the moon’s pale light
Pursue the stars that shoot across the night,

Or seek the mists in grosser air below,
 Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,
 Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
 Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain."

Leigh Hunt's theory was that Pope, with all his skill, had spoiled instead of perfecting his instrument, and that the last true master of the heroic couplet had been Dryden, on whom the verse of *Rimini* is avowedly modelled. The result is an odd blending of the grave and the colloquial cadences of Dryden, without his characteristic nerve and energy in either :

"The prince, at this, would bend on her an eye
 Cordial enough, and kiss her tenderly ;
 Nor, to say truly, was he slow in common
 To accept the attentions of this lovely woman ;
 But the meantime he took no generous pains,
 By mutual pleasing, to secure his gains ;
 He entered not, in turn, in her delights,
 Her books, her flowers, her taste for rural sights ;
 Nay, scarcely her sweet singing minded he
 Unless his pride was roused by company ;
 Or when to please him, after martial play,
 She strained her lute to some old fiery lay
 Of fierce Orlando, or of Ferumbras,
 Or Ryan's cloak, or how by the red grass
 In battle you might know where Richard was."

It is usually said that to the example thus set by Leigh Hunt in *Rimini* is due the rhythmical form alike of *Endymion* and *Epipsychidion*, of Keats's *Epistles* to his friends and Shelley's *Letter to Maria Gisborne*. Certainly the *Epistles* of Keats, both as to sentiment and rhythm, are very much in Hunt's manner. But the earliest of them, that to G. F. Mathew, is dated November, 1815, when

Rimini was not yet published, and when it appears Keats did not yet know Hunt personally. He may, indeed, have known his poem in MS. through Clarke or others; or the likeness of his work to Hunt's may have arisen independently: as to style, from a natural affinity of feeling; and as to rhythm, from a familiarity with the disyllabic rhyme and the "overflow" as used by some of the Elizabethan writers, particularly by Spenser in *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, and by Browne in *Britannia's Pastorals*. At all events the appearance of *Rimini* tended unquestionably to encourage and confirm him in his practice.

As to Hunt's success with his "ideas of what is natural in style," and his "free and idiomatic cast of language" to supersede the styles alike of Pope and Wordsworth, the specimen of his which we have given is perhaps enough. The taste that guided him so well in appreciating the works of others deserted him often in original composition, but nowhere so completely as in *Rimini*. The piece, indeed, is not without agreeable passages of picturesque colour and description, but for the rest the pleasant creature does but exaggerate in this poem the chief foible of his prose, redoubling his vivacious airs where they are least in place, and handling the great passions of the theme with a tea-party manner and vocabulary that are intolerable. Contemporaries, welcoming as a relief any departure from the outworn poetical conventions of the eighteenth century, found, indeed, something to praise in Leigh Hunt's *Rimini*, and ladies are said to have wept over the sorrows of the hero and heroine; but what, one can only ask, must be the sensibilities of the human being who can endure to hear the story of Paolo and Francesca—Dante's Paolo and Francesca—diluted through four cantos in a style like this?—

"What need I tell of lovely lips and eyes,
A clipsome waist, and bosom's balmy rise?"

"How charming, would he think, to see her here,
How heightened then, and perfect would appear
The two divinest things the world has got,
A lovely woman in a rural spot."

When Keats and Shelley, with their immeasurably finer poetical gifts and instincts, successively followed Leigh Hunt in the attempt to add a familiar lenity of style to variety of movement in this metre, Shelley, it need not be said, was in no danger of falling into any such underbred strain as this; but Keats at first falls, or is near falling, into it more than once.

Next as to the influence which Leigh Hunt involuntarily exercised on his friends' fortunes, and their estimation by the world. We have seen how he found himself, in prison, and for some time after his release, a kind of political hero on the liberal side, a part for which nature had by no means fitted him. This was in itself enough to mark him out as a special butt for Tory vengeance; yet that vengeance would hardly have been so inveterate as it was but for other secondary causes. During his imprisonment Leigh Hunt had reprinted from the *Reflector*, with notes and additions, an airily presumptuous trifle in verse called the *Feast of the Poets*, which he had written about two years before. In it Apollo is represented as convoking the contemporary British poets, or pretenders to the poetical title, to a session, or rather to a supper. Some of those who present themselves the god rejects with scorn, others he cordially welcomes, others he admits with reserve and admonition. Moore and Campbell fare the best; Southey and Scott are accepted, but with reproof; Coleridge and Wordsworth chidden and dismissed. The criticisms

are not more short-sighted than those even of just and able men commonly are on their contemporaries. The bitterness of the "Lost Leader" feeling to which we have referred accounts for much of Hunt's disparagement of the Lake writers, while in common with all liberals he was prejudiced against Scott as a conspicuous high Tory and friend to kings. But he quite acknowledged the genius, while he condemned the defection, and also what he thought the poetical perversities, of Wordsworth. His treatment of Scott, on the other hand, is idly flippant and patronising. Now it so happened that of the two champions who were soon after to wield, one the bludgeon, and the other the dagger, of Tory criticism in Edinburgh, —I mean Wilson and Lockhart—Wilson was the cordial friend and admirer of Wordsworth, and Lockhart a man of many hatreds but one great devotion, and that devotion was to Scott. Hence a part at least of the peculiar and, as it might seem, paradoxical rancour with which the gentle Hunt, and Keats as his friend and supposed follower, were by-and-bye to be persecuted in *Blackwood*.

To go back to the point at which Hunt and Keats first became known to each other. Cowden Clarke began by carrying up to Hunt, who had now moved from the Edge-ware Road to a cottage in the Vale of Health at Hampstead, a few of Keats's poems in manuscript. Horace Smith was with Hunt when the young poet's work was shown him. Both were eager in its praises, and in questions concerning the person and character of the author. Cowden Clarke at Hunt's request brought Keats to call on him soon afterwards, and has left a vivid account of their pleasant welcome and conversation. The introduction seems to have taken place early in the spring of 1816.¹ Keats

¹ See Appendix, p. 220.

immediately afterwards became intimate in the Hampstead household, and for the next year or two Hunt's was the strongest intellectual influence to which he was subject. So far as opinions were concerned, those of Keats had already, as we have seen, been partly formed in boyhood by Leigh Hunt's writings in the *Examiner*. Hunt was a confirmed sceptic as to established creeds, and supplied their place with a private gospel of cheerfulness, or system of sentimental optimism, inspired partly by his own sunny temperament, and partly by the hopeful doctrines of eighteenth-century philosophy in France. Keats shared the natural sympathy of generous youth for Hunt's liberal and optimistic view of things, and he had a mind naturally unapt for dogma—ready to entertain and appreciate any set of ideas according as his imagination recognised their beauty or power, he could never wed himself to any as representing ultimate truth. In matters of poetic feeling and fancy Keats and Hunt had not a little in common. Both alike were given to "luxuriating" somewhat effusively and fondly over the "deliciousness" of whatever they liked in art, books, or nature. To the every-day pleasures of summer and the English fields Hunt brought in a lower degree the same alertness of perception, and acuteness of sensuous and imaginative enjoyment, which in Keats were intense beyond parallel. In his lighter and shallower way Hunt also felt with Keats the undying charm of classic fable, and was scholar enough to produce about this time some agreeable translations of the Sicilian pastorals, and some, less adequate, of Homer. The poets Hunt loved best were Ariosto and the other Italian masters of the chivalrous-fanciful epic style; and in English he was devoted to Keats's own favourite, Spenser.

The name of Spenser is often coupled with that of "Lib-

ertas," "the lov'd Libertas," meaning Leigh Hunt, in the verses written by Keats at this time. He attempts in some of these verses to embody the spirit of the *Fairie Queene* in the metre of *Rimini*, and in others to express in the same form the pleasures of nature as he felt them in straying about the beautiful, then rural, Hampstead woods and slopes. In the summer of 1816 he seems to have spent a good deal of his time at the Vale of Health, where a bed was made up for him in the library. In one poem he dilates at length on the associations suggested by the busts and knick-knacks in the room; and the sonnet beginning, "Keen, fitful gusts are whispering here and there," records pleasantly his musings as he walked home from his friend's house one night in winter. We find him presenting Hunt with a crown of ivy, and receiving a set of sonnets from him in return. Or they would challenge each other to the composition of rival pieces on a chosen theme. Cowden Clarke, in describing one such occasion in December, 1816, when they each wrote to time a sonnet *on the Grasshopper and Cricket*, has left us a pleasant picture of their relations:

"The event of the after-scrutiny was one of many such occurrences which have riveted the memory of Leigh Hunt in my affectionate regard and admiration for unaffected generosity and perfectly unpretentious encouragement. His sincere look of pleasure at the first line—

" 'The poetry of earth is never dead.'

'Such a prosperous opening!' he said; and when he came to the tenth and eleventh lines—

" 'On a lone winter morning, when the frost
Hath wrought a silence'—

'Ah, that's perfect! Bravo Keats!' And then he went on in a dilatation on the dumbness of Nature during the season's suspension and torpidity."

Through Leigh Hunt Keats was before long introduced to a number of congenial spirits. Among them he attached himself especially to one John Hamilton Reynolds, a poetic aspirant who, though a year younger than himself, had preceded him with his first literary venture. Reynolds was born at Shrewsbury, and his father settled afterwards in London as writing-master at the Blue Coat School. He lacked health and energy, but has left the reputation of a brilliant playful wit, and the evidence of a charming character and no slight literary talent. He held a clerkship in an Insurance office, and lived in Little Britain with his family, including three sisters with whom Keats was also intimate, and the eldest of whom afterwards married Thomas Hood. His earliest poems show him inspired feelingly enough with the new romance and nature sentiment of the time. One, *Safe*, is an indifferent imitation of Byron in his then fashionable Oriental vein; much better work appears in a volume published in the year of Keats's death, and partly prompted by the writer's relations with him. In a lighter strain Reynolds wrote a musical entertainment which was brought out in 1819 at what is now the Lyceum theatre, and about the same time offended Wordsworth with an anticipatory parody of *Peter Bell*, which Byron assumed to be the work of Moore. In 1822 he produced a spirited sketch in prose and verse purporting to relate, under the name *Peter Corcoran*, the fortunes of an amateur of the prize-ring; and a little later, in conjunction with Hood, the volume of anonymous *Odes and Addresses to Eminent Persons* which Coleridge on its appearance declared confidently to be the work of Lamb. But Reynolds had early given up the hope of living by literature, and accepted the offer of an opening in business as a solicitor. In 1818 he inscribed a farewell son-

net to the Muses in a copy of Shakspeare which he gave to Keats, and in 1821 he writes again,

"As time increases
I give up drawling verse for drawing leases."

In point of fact, Reynolds continued for years to contribute to the *London Magazine* and other reviews, and to work occasionally in conjunction with Hood. But neither in literature nor law did he attain a position commensurate with the promise of his youth. Starting level, at the time of which we speak, with men who are now in the first rank of fame—with Keats and Shelley—he died in 1852 as Clerk of the County at Newport, Isle of Wight, and it is only in association with Keats that his name will live. Not only was he one of the warmest friends Keats had, entertaining from the first an enthusiastic admiration for his powers, as a sonnet written early in their acquaintance proves,¹ but also one of the wisest, and by judicious advice more than once saved him from a mistake. In connection with the name of Reynolds among Keats's associates must be mentioned that of his inseparable friend, James Rice, a young solicitor of literary tastes and infinite jest, chronically ailing or worse in health, but always, in Keats's words, "coming on his legs again like a cat;" ever cheerful and willing in spite of his sufferings, and indefatigable in good offices to those about him. "Dear noble generous James Rice," records Dilke—"the best, and in his quaint way one of the wittiest and wisest, men I ever knew." Besides Reynolds, another and more insignificant rhyming member of Hunt's set, when Keats first joined it, was one Cornelius Webb, remembered now, if remem-

¹ See Appendix, p. 220.

bered at all, by *Blackwood's* derisory quotation of his lines on—

“Keats,
The Muses' son of promise, and what feats
He yet may do—”

as well as by a disparaging allusion in one of Keats's own later letters. He disappeared early from the circle, but not before he had caught enough of its spirit to write sonnets and poetical addresses which might almost be taken for the work of Hunt, or even for that of Keats himself in his weak moments.¹ For some years afterwards Webb served as press-reader in the printing-office of Messrs. Clowes, being charged especially with the revision of the *Quarterly* proofs. Towards 1830–1840 he re-appeared in literature as Cornelius “Webbe,” author of the *Man about Town*, and other volumes of cheerful gossiping Cockney essays, to which the *Quarterly* critics extended a patronizing notice.

An acquaintance more interesting to posterity which Keats made a few months later at Leigh Hunt's was that of Shelley, his senior by only three years. During the harrowing period of Shelley's life which followed the suicide of his first wife—when his principle of love, a law to itself, had in action entailed so dire a consequence, and his obedience to his own morality had brought him into such harsh collision with the world's—the kindness and affection of Leigh Hunt were among his chief consolations. After his marriage with Mary Godwin he flitted often, alone or with his wife, between Great Marlow and Hampstead, where Keats met him early in the spring of 1817. “Keats,” says Hunt, “did not take to Shelley as kindly as

¹ See particularly the *Invocation to Sleep* in the little volume of Webb's poems published by the Olliers in 1821.

Shelley did to him," and adds the comment, "Keats, being a little too sensitive on the score of his origin, felt inclined to see in every man of birth a sort of natural enemy." "He was haughty, and had a fierce hatred of rank," says Haydon in his unqualified way. Where his pride had not been aroused by anticipation, Keats had a genius for friendship, but towards Shelley we find him in fact maintaining a tone of reserve, and even of something like moral and intellectual patronage, at first, no doubt, by way of defence against the possibility of social or material patronage on the other's part; but he should soon have learnt better than to apprehend anything of the kind from one whose delicacy, according to all evidence, was as perfect and unmistakable as his kindness. Of Shelley's kindness Keats had in the sequel sufficient proof; in the meantime, until Shelley went abroad the following year, the two met often at Hunt's without becoming really intimate. Pride and social sensitiveness apart, we can imagine that a full understanding was not easy between them, and that Keats, with his strong vein of every-day humanity, sense, and humour, and his innate openness of mind, may well have been as much repelled as attracted by the unearthly ways and accents of Shelley, his passionate negation of the world's creeds and the world's law, and his intense proselytizing ardour.

It was also at Hunt's house that Keats for the first time met by pre-arrangement, in the beginning of November, 1816, the painter Haydon, whose influence soon became hardly second to that of Hunt himself. Haydon was now thirty. He had lately been victorious in one of the two great objects of his ambition, and had achieved a temporary semblance of victory in the other. He had been mainly instrumental in getting the pre-eminence of the

Elgin marbles among the works of the sculptor's art acknowledged in the teeth of hostile cliques, and their acquisition for the nation secured. This is Haydon's chief real title to the regard of posterity. His other and life-long, half insane endeavour was to persuade the world to take him at his own estimate, as the man chosen by Providence to add the crown of heroic painting to the other glories of his country. His indomitable high-flaming energy and industry, his strenuous self-reliance, his eloquence, vehemence, and social gifts, the clamour of his self-assertion and of his fierce oppugnancy against the academic powers, even his unabashed claims for support on friends, patrons, and society at large, had won for him much convinced or half-convinced attention and encouragement, both in the world of art and letters and in that of dilettanteism and fashion. His first two great pictures, "Dentatus" and "Macbeth," had been dubiously received; his last, the "Judgment of Solomon," with acclamation; he was now busy on one more ambitious than all, "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem," and while, as usual, sunk deep in debt, was perfectly confident of glory. Vain confidence—for he was in truth a man whom nature had endowed, as if maliciously, with one part of the gifts of genius and not the other. Its energy and voluntary power he possessed completely, and no man has ever lived at a more genuinely exalted pitch of feeling and aspiration. "Never," wrote he about this time, "have I had such irresistible and perpetual urgings of future greatness. I have been like a man with air-balloons under his arm-pits and ether in his soul. While I was painting, walking, or thinking, beaming flashes of energy followed and impressed me. . . . They came over me, and shot across me, and shook me, till I lifted up my heart and thanked God." But for all his sensations and conviction of power,

the other half of genius—the half which resides not in energy and will, but in faculties which it is the business of energy and will to apply—was denied to Haydon; its vital gifts of choice and of creation, its magic power of working on the materials offered it by experience, its felicity of touch and insight, were not in him. Except for a stray note here and there, an occasional bold conception, or a touch of craftsmanship caught from greater men, the pictures with which he exultingly laid siege to immortality belong, as posterity has justly felt, to the kingdom not of true heroic art, but of rodomontade. Even in drawing from the Elgin marbles, Haydon fails almost wholly to express the beauties which he enthusiastically perceived, and loses every distinction and every subtlety of the original. Very much better is his account of them in words, as, indeed, Haydon's chief intellectual power was as an observer, and his best instrument the pen. Readers of his journals and correspondence know with what fluent, effective, if often overcharged, force and vividness of style he can relate an experience or touch off a character. But in this, the literary form of expression, also, as often as he flies higher, and tries to become imaginative and impressive, we find only the same self-satisfied void turgidity, and proof of a commonplace mind, as in his paintings. Take, for instance, in relation to Keats himself, Haydon's profound admonition to him as follows: "God bless you, my dear Keats! do not despair; collect incident, study character, read Shakspeare, and trust in Providence, and you will do, you must;" or the following precious expansion of an image in one of the poet's sonnets on the Elgin marbles: "I know not a finer image than the comparison of a poet unable to express his high feelings to a sick eagle looking at the sky, where he must have remembered his former towerings

amid the blaze of dazzling sunbeams, in the pure expanse of glittering clouds; now and then passing angels, on heavenly errands, lying at the will of the wind with moveless wings, or pitching downward with a fiery rush, eager and intent on objects of their seeking—”

But it was the gifts and faculties which Haydon possessed, and not those he lacked, it was the ardour and enthusiasm of his temperament, and not his essential commonness of mind and faculty, that impressed his associates as they impressed himself. The most distinguished spirits of the time were among his friends. Some of them, like Wordsworth, held by him always, while his imperious and importunate egotism wore out others after a while. He was justly proud of his industry and strength of purpose; proud also of his religious faith and piety, and in the habit of thanking his Maker effusively in set terms for special acts of favour and protection, for this or that happy inspiration in a picture, for deliverance from “pecuniary emergencies,” and the like. “I always rose up from my knees,” he says strikingly in a letter to Keats, “with a refreshed fury, an iron-clenched firmness, a crystal piety of feeling that sent me streaming on with a repulsive power against the troubles of life.” And he was prone to hold himself up as a model to his friends in both particulars, lecturing them on faith and conduct while he was living, it might be, on their bounty. Experience of these qualities partly alienated Keats from him in the long run. But at first sight Haydon had much to attract the spirits of ardent youth about him as a leader, and he and Keats were mutually delighted when they met. Each struck fire from the other, and they quickly became close friends and comrades. After an evening of high talk at the beginning of their acquaintance, on the 19th of November, 1816, the

young poet wrote to Haydon as follows, joining his name with those of Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt :

"Last evening wrought me up, and I cannot forbear sending you the following :

Great spirits now on earth are sojourning :
He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,
Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,
Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing :
He of the rose, the violet, the spring,
The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake,
And lo ! whose steadfastness would never take
A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering.
And other spirits there are standing apart
Upon the forehead of the age to come ;
These, these will give the world another heart,
And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum
Of mighty workings in the human mart ?
Listen awhile, ye nations, and be dumb."

Haydon was not unused to compliments of this kind. The three well-known sonnets of Wordsworth had been addressed to him a year or two before ; and about the same time as Keats, John Hamilton Reynolds also wrote him a sonnet of enthusiastic sympathy and admiration. In his reply to Keats he proposed to hand on the above piece to Wordsworth—a proposal which "puts me," answers Keats, "out of breath—you know with what reverence I would send my well-wishes to him." Haydon suggested, moreover, what I cannot but think the needless and regrettable mutilation of the sonnet by leaving out the words after "workings" in the last line but one. The poet, however, accepted the suggestion, and his editors have respected his decision. Two other sonnets, which Keats wrote at this time, after visiting the Elgin marbles with his new friend, are indifferent poetically, but do

credit to his sincerity in that he refuses to go into stock raptures on the subject, confessing his inability rightly to grasp or analyse the impressions he had received. By the spring of the following year his intimacy with Haydon was at its height, and we find the painter giving his young friend a standing invitation to his studio in Great Marlborough Street, declaring him dearer than a brother, and praying that their hearts may be buried together.

To complete the group of Keats's friends in these days, we have to think of two or three others known to him otherwise than through Hunt, and not belonging to the Hunt circle. Among these were the family and friends of a Miss Georgiana Wylie, to whom George Keats was attached. She was the daughter of a navy officer, with wit, sentiment, and an attractive irregular cast of beauty, and Keats on his own account had a great liking for her. On Valentine's day, 1816, we find him writing, for George to send her, the first draft of the lines beginning, "Hadst thou lived in days of old," afterwards amplified and published in his first volume.¹ Through the Wylies Keats became acquainted with a certain William Haslam, who was afterwards one of his own and his brothers' best friends, but whose character and person remain indistinct to us; and through Haslam with Joseph Severn, then a very young and struggling student of art. Severn was the son of an engraver, and to the despair of his father had determined to be himself a painter. He had a talent also for music, a strong love of literature, and doubtless something already of that social charm which Mr. Ruskin describes in him when they first met five-and-twenty years later at Rome.² From the moment of their introduction Severn

¹ See Appendix, p. 221.

² See *Praeterita*, vol. ii., chap. 2.

found in Keats his very ideal of the poetical character realized, and attached himself to him with an admiring affection.

A still younger member of the Keats circle was Charles Wells, afterwards author of *Stories after Nature*, and of that singular and strongly imagined Biblical drama or "dramatic poem" of *Joseph and his Brethren*, which having fallen dead in its own day has been resuscitated by a group of poets and critics in ours. Wells had been a school companion of Tom Keats at Enfield, and was now living with his family in Featherstone buildings. He has been described by those who knew him as a sturdy, boisterous, blue-eyed and red-headed lad, distinguished in those days chiefly by an irrepressible spirit of fun and mischief. He was only about fifteen when he sent to John Keats the present of roses acknowledged in the sonnet beginning, "As late I rambled in the happy fields." A year or two later Keats quarrelled with him for a practical joke played on Tom Keats without due consideration for his state of health; and the *Stories after Nature*, published in 1822, are said to have been written in order to show Keats "that he too could do something."

Thus by his third winter in London our obscurely born and half-schooled young medical student found himself fairly launched in a world of art, letters, and liberal aspirations, and living in familiar intimacy with some, and friendly acquaintance with others, of the brightest and most ardent spirits of the time. His youth, origin, and temperament alike saved him from anything but a healthy relation of equality with his younger, and deference towards his elder, companions. But the power and the charm of genius were already visibly upon him. Portraits both verbal and other exist in abundance, enabling us to realize

his presence and the impression which he made. "The character and expression of his features," it is said, "would arrest even the casual passenger in the street." A small, handsome, ardent-looking youth—the stature little over five feet; the figure compact and well-turned, with the neck thrust eagerly forward, carrying a strong and shapely head set off by thickly clustering gold-brown hair; the features powerful, finished, and mobile; the mouth rich and wide, with an expression at once combative and sensitive in the extreme; the forehead not high, but broad and strong; the eyebrows nobly arched, and eyes hazel-brown, liquid-flashing, visibly inspired—"an eye that had an inward look, perfectly divine, like a Delphian priestess who saw visions." "Keats was the only man I ever met who seemed and looked conscious of a high calling, except Wordsworth." These words are Haydon's, and to the same effect Leigh Hunt: "The eyes mellow and glowing, large, dark, and sensitive. At the recital of a noble action or a beautiful thought they would suffuse with tears, and his mouth trembled." It is noticeable that his friends, whenever they begin to describe his looks, go off in this way to tell of the feelings and the soul that shone through them. To return to Haydon: "He was in his glory in the fields. The humming of a bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the sun, seemed to make his nature tremble; then his eyes flashed, his cheek glowed, and his mouth quivered." In like manner George Keats: "John's eyes moistened and his lip quivered at the relation of any tale of generosity or benevolence or noble daring, or at sights of loveliness or distress;" and a shrewd and honoured survivor of those days, "herself of many poets the frequent theme and valued friend"—need I name Mrs. Procter?—has recorded the impression the same eyes have left upon

her, as those of one who had been looking on some glorious sight.¹

In regard to his social qualities, Keats is said, and owns himself, to have been not always perfectly well-conditioned or at his ease in the company of women, but in that of men all accounts agree that he was pleasantness itself: quiet and abstracted, or brilliant and voluble, by turns, according to his mood and company, but thoroughly amiable and unaffected. If the conversation did not interest him he was apt to draw apart, and sit by himself in the window, peering into vacancy, so that the window-seat came to be recognized as his place. His voice was rich and low, and when he joined in discussion it was usually with an eager but gentle animation, while his occasional bursts of fiery indignation at wrong or meanness bore no undue air of assumption, and failed not to command respect. His powers of mimicry and dramatic recital are said to have been great, and never used unkindly.

Thus stamped by nature, and moving in such a circle as we have described, Keats found among those with whom he lived nothing to check, but rather everything to foster, his hourly growing, still diffident and trembling, passion for the poetic life. His guardian, as we have said, of course was adverse; but his brothers, including George, the practical and sensible one of the family, were warmly with him, as his allusions and addresses to them both in prose and verse, and their own many transcripts from his compositions, show. In August, 1816, we find him addressing from Margate a sonnet and a poetical Epistle in terms of the utmost affection and confidence to George. About the same time he gave up his lodgings in St.

¹ See Appendix, p. 221.

Thomas's Street to go and live with his brothers in the Poultry; and in November he composes another sonnet on their fraternal fire-side occupations. Poetry and the love of poetry were at this period in the air. It was a time when even people of business and people of fashion read: a time of literary excitement, expectancy, and discussion, such as England has not known since. In such an atmosphere Keats soon found himself induced to try his fortune and his powers with the rest. The encouragement of his friends was indeed only too ready and enthusiastic. It was Leigh Hunt who first brought him before the world in print, publishing without comment, in the *Examiner* for the 5th of May, 1816, his sonnet beginning, "O Solitude! if I with thee must dwell," and on the 1st of December in the same year the sonnet on Chapman's Homer. This Hunt accompanied by some prefatory remarks on the poetical promise of its author, associating with his name those of Shelley and Reynolds. It was by the praise of Hunt in this paper, says Mr. Stephens, that Keats's fate was sealed. But already the still more ardent encouragement of Haydon, if more was wanted, had come to add fuel to the fire. In the Marlborough Street studio, in the Hampstead cottage, in the City lodgings of the three brothers, and in the convivial gatherings of their friends, it was determined that John Keats should put forth a volume of his poems. A sympathetic firm of publishers was found in the Olliers. The volume was printed, and the last proof-sheets were brought one evening to the author amid a jovial company, with the intimation that if a dedication was to be added the copy must be furnished at once. Keats, going to one side, quickly produced the sonnet *To Leigh Hunt, Esq.*, with its excellent opening and its weak conclusion:

“Glory and Loveliness have pass’d away ;
For if we wander out in early morn,
No wreathèd incense do we see upborne
Into the East to meet the smiling day :
No crowd of nymphs soft-voiced and young and gay,
In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,
Roses and pinks, and violets, to adorn
The shrine of Flora in her early May.
But there are left delights as high as these,
And I shall ever bless my destiny,
That in a time when under pleasant trees
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free,
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please,
With these poor offerings, a man like thee.”

With this confession of a longing retrospect towards the beauty of the old pagan world, and of gratitude for present friendship, the young poet’s first venture was sent forth in the month of March, 1817.

CHAPTER III.

The Poems of 1817.

THE note of Keats's early volume is accurately struck in the motto from Spenser which he prefixed to it:

"What more felicity can fall to creature
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?"

The element in which his poetry moves is liberty, the consciousness of release from those conventions and restraints, not inherent in its true nature, by which the art had for the last hundred years been hampered. And the spirit which animates him is essentially the spirit of delight—delight in the beauty of nature and the vividness of sensation, delight in the charm of fable and romance, in the thoughts of friendship and affection, in anticipations of the future, and in the exercise of the art itself which expresses and communicates all these joys.

We have already glanced, in connection with the occasions which gave rise to them, at a few of the miscellaneous boyish pieces, in various metres, which are included in the volume, as well as at some of the sonnets. The remaining, and much the chief portion of the book consists of half a dozen poems in the rhymed decasyllabic couplet. These had all been written during the period between November, 1815, and April, 1817, under the combined influ-

ence of the older English poets and of Leigh Hunt. The former influence shows itself everywhere in the substance and spirit of the poems, but less, for the present, in their form and style. Keats had by this time thrown off the eighteenth-century stiffness which clung to his earliest efforts, but he had not yet adopted, as he was about to do, a vocabulary and diction of his own, full of licences caught from the Elizabethans and from Milton. The chief verbal echoes of Spenser to be found in his first volume are a line quoted from him entire in the epistle to G. F. Mathew, and the use of the archaic "teen" in the stanzas professedly Spenserian. We can, indeed, trace Keats's familiarity with Chapman, and especially with one poem of Chapman's, his translation of the Homeric *Hymn to Pan*, in a predilection for a particular form of abstract descriptive substantive:

"The pillowy silkiness that rests
Full in the speculation of the stars:"

"Or the quaint mossiness of aged roots:"

"Ere I can have explored its widenesses."¹

The only other distinguishing marks of Keats's diction in this first volume consist, I think, in the use of the Miltonic "sphery," and of an unmeaning coinage of his own,

¹ Compare Chapman, *Hymn to Pan*:

"The bright-hair'd god of pastoral,
Who yet is lean and loveless, and doth owe,
By lot, all loftiest mountains crown'd with snow,
All tops of hills, and *cliffy highnesses*,
All sylvan copses, and the fortresses
Of thorniest queaches here and there doth rove,
And sometimes, by allurements of his love,
Will wade the *wat'ry softnesses*."

"boundly," with a habit—for which Milton, Spenser, and, among the moderns, Leigh Hunt, all alike furnished him the example—of turning nouns into verbs, and verbs into nouns at his convenience. For the rest, Keats writes in the ordinary English of his day, with much more feeling for beauty of language than for correctness, and as yet without any formed or assured poetic style. Single lines and passages declare, indeed, abundantly his vital poetic faculty and instinct. But they are mixed up with much that only illustrates his crudity of taste, and the tendency he at this time shared with Leigh Hunt to mistake the air of chatty, trivial gusto for an air of poetic ease and grace.

In the matter of metre, we can see Keats in these poems making a succession of experiments for varying the regularity of the heroic couplet. In the colloquial *Epistles*, addressed severally to G. F. Mathew, to his brother George, and to Cowden Clarke, he contents himself with the use of frequent dissyllabic rhymes, and an occasional *enjambement* or "overflow." In the *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem*, and in the fragment of the poem itself, entitled *Calidore* (a name borrowed from the hero of Spenser's sixth book), as well as in the unnamed piece beginning "I stood tiptoe upon a little hill," which opens the volume, he further modifies the measure by shortening now and then the second line of the couplet, with a lyric beat that may have been caught either from Spenser's nuptial odes or Milton's *Lycidas*—

"Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds."

In *Sleep and Poetry*, which is the most personal and interesting, as well as probably the last-written, poem in the volume, Keats drops this practice, but in other respects va-

ries the rhythm far more boldly, making free use of the overflow, placing his full pauses at any point in a line rather than at the end, and adopting as a principle rather than an exception the Chaucerian and Elizabethan fashion of breaking the couplet by closing a sentence or paragraph with its first line.

Passing from the form of the poems to their substance, we find that they are experiments or poetic preludes merely, with no pretension to be organic or complete works of art. To rehearse ramblingly the pleasures and aspirations of the poetic life, letting one train of images follow another with no particular plan or sequence, is all that Keats as yet attempts, except in the *Calidore* fragment, and that is on the whole feeble and confused. From the outset the poet loses himself in a maze of young, luxuriant imagery; once and again, however, he gets clear, and we have some good lines in an approach to the Dryden manner:

"Softly the breezes from the forest came,
Softly they blew aside the taper's flame;
Clear was the song from Philomel's far bower;
Grateful the incense from the lime-tree flower;
Mysterious, wild, the far-heard trumpet's tone;
Lovely the moon in ether, all alone."

To set against this are occasionally expressions in the complete taste of Leigh Hunt, as for instance,

"The lamps that from the high-roof'd wall were pendent,
And gave the steel a shining quite transcendent."

The *Epistles* are full of cordial tributes to the conjoint pleasures of literature and friendship. In that to Cowden Clarke, Keats acknowledges to his friend that he had been shy at first of addressing verses to him:

"Nor should I now, but that I've known you long;
 That you first taught me all the sweets of song:
 The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the fine,¹
 What swell'd with pathos, and what right divine:
 Spenserian vowels that elope with ease,
 And float along like birds o'er summer seas;
 Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness;
 Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's fair slenderness.
 Who read for me the sonnet swelling loudly
 Up to its climax, and then dying proudly?
 Who found for me the grandeur of the ode,
 Growing, like Atlas, stronger for its load?
 Who let me taste that more than cordial dram,
 The sharp, the rapier-pointed epigram?
 Show'd me that Epic was of all the king,
 Round, vast, and spanning all like Saturn's ring?"

This is characteristic enough of the quieter and lighter manner of Keats in his early work. Blots like the ungrammatical fourth line are not infrequent with him. The preference for Miltonian tenderness over Miltonian storms may remind the reader of a later poet's more masterly expression of the same sentiment: "Me rather all that bowery loneliness." The two lines on Spenser are of interest as conveying one of those incidental criticisms on poetry by a poet of which no one has left us more or better than Keats. The habit of Spenser to which he here alludes is that of coupling or repeating the same vowels, both in their open and their closed sounds, in the same or successive lines, for example,

"Eftsoones her shallow ship away did slide,
 More swift than swallow sheres the liquid skye;
 Withouten oare or pilot it to guide,
 Or winged canvas with the wind to fly."

The run here is on *a* and *i*, principally on *i*, which occurs

five times in its open and ten times in its closed sound in the four lines—if we are indeed to reckon as one vowel these two unlike sounds denoted by the same sign. Keats was a close and conscious student of the musical effects of verse, and the practice of Spenser is said to have suggested to him a special theory as to the use and value of the iteration of vowel sounds in poetry. What his theory was we are not clearly told, neither do I think it can easily be discovered from his practice, though every one must feel a great beauty of his verse to be in the richness of the vowel and diphthong sequences. He often spoke of the subject, and once maintained his view against Wordsworth, when the latter seemed to be advocating a mechanical principle of vowel variation.

Hear next how the joys of brotherly affection, of poetry, and of nature come naïvely jostling one another in the *Epistle* addressed from the sea-side to his brother George:

"As to my sonnets, though none else should heed them,
I feel delighted, still, that you should read them.
Of late, too, I have had much calm enjoyment,
Stretch'd on the grass at my best loved employment
Of scribbling lines for you. These things I thought
While in my face the freshest breeze I caught.
E'en now I am pillow'd on a bed of flowers
That crowns a lofty cliff, which proudly towers
Above the ocean waves. The stalks and blades
Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades.
On one side is a field of drooping oats,
Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats;
So pert and useless that they bring to mind
The scarlet coats that pester human kind.
And on the other side, outspread is seen
Ocean's blue mantle, streak'd with purple and green.
Now 'tis I see a canvass'd ship, and now
Mark the bright silver curling round her brow;

I see the lark down-dropping to his nest,
And the broad-wing'd sea-gull never at rest;
For when no more he spreads his feathers free,
His breast is dancing on the restless sea."

It is interesting to watch the newly awakened literary faculty in Keats thus exercising itself in the narrow circle of personal sensation, and on the description of the objects immediately before his eyes. The effect of rhythmical movement attempted in the last lines, to correspond with the buoyancy and variety of the motions described, has a certain felicity, and the whole passage is touched already with Keats's exquisite perception and enjoyment of external nature. His character as a poet of nature begins, indeed, distinctly to declare itself in this first volume. He differs by it alike from Wordsworth and from Shelley. The instinct of Wordsworth was to interpret all the operations of nature by those of his own strenuous soul; and the imaginative impressions he had received in youth from the scenery of his home, deepened and enriched by continual after-meditation, and mingling with all the currents of his adult thought and feeling, constituted for him throughout his life the most vital part alike of patriotism, of philosophy, and of religion. For Shelley, on his part, natural beauty was in a twofold sense symbolical. In the visible glories of the world his philosophy saw the veil of the unseen, while his philanthropy found in them types and auguries of a better life on earth, and all that imagery of nature's more remote and skyey phenomena, of which no other poet has had an equal mastery, and which comes borne to us along the music of the verse—

"With many a mingled close
Of wild Æolian sound and mountain odour keen"—

was inseparable in his soul from visions of a radiant future and a renovated—alas! not a human—humanity. In Keats the sentiment of nature was simpler than in either of these two other masters; more direct, and, so to speak, more disinterested. It was his instinct to love and interpret nature more for her own sake, and less for the sake of sympathy which the human mind can read into her with its own workings and aspirations. He had grown up neither like Wordsworth, under the spell of lake and mountain, nor in the glow of millennial dreams, like Shelley, but London-born and Middlesex-bred, was gifted, we know not whence, as if by some mysterious birthright, with a delighted insight into all the beauties, and sympathy with all the life, of the woods and fields. Evidences of the gift appear, as every reader knows, in the longer poems of his first volume, with their lingering trains of peaceful summer imagery, and loving inventories of "Nature's gentle doings;" and pleasant touches of the same kind are scattered also among the sonnets, as in that *To Charles Wells*—

"As late I rambled in the happy fields,
What time the skylark shakes the tremulous dew
From his lush clover covert;"

or again in that *To Solitude*—

"Let me thy vigils keep
'Mongst boughs pavilion'd, where the deer's swift leap
Startles the wild bee from the foxglove bell."¹

¹ Compare Wordsworth:

"Bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest peak of Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells."

Is the line of Keats an echo or merely a coincidence?

Such intuitive familiarity with the blithe activities, unnoted by common eyes, which make up the life and magic of nature, is a gift we attribute to men of primitive race and forest nurture; and Mr. Matthew Arnold would have us recognize it as peculiarly characteristic of the Celtic element in the English genius and English poetry. It was allied in Keats to another instinct of the early world which we associate especially with the Greeks, the instinct for personifying the powers of nature in clearly defined imaginary shapes endowed with human beauty and half-human faculties. The classical teaching of the Enfield school had not gone beyond Latin, and neither in boyhood nor afterwards did Keats acquire any Greek; but towards the creations of the Greek mythology he was attracted by an overmastering delight in their beauty, and a natural sympathy with the phase of imagination that engendered them. Especially he shows himself possessed and fancy-bound by the mythology, as well as by the physical enchantment, of the moon. Never was bard in youth so literally moonstruck. He had planned a poem on the ancient story of the loves of Diana, with whom the Greek moon-goddess Selene is identified in the Latin mythology, and the shepherd-prince Endymion; and had begun a sort of prelude to it in the piece that opens, "I stood tiptoe upon a little hill." Afterwards, without abandoning the subject, Keats laid aside this particular exordium, and printed it, as we have seen, as an independent piece at the head of his first volume. It is at the climax of a passage rehearsing the delights of evening that he first bethinks himself of the moon—

"Lifting her silver rim
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim
Coming into the blue with all her light."

The thought of the mythic passion of the moon-goddess for Endymion, and the praises of the poet who first sang it, follow at considerable length. The passage conjuring up the wonders and beneficences of their bridal night is written in part with such a sympathetic touch for the collective feelings and predicaments of men, in the ordinary conditions of human pain and pleasure, health and sickness, as rarely occurs again in Keats's poetry, though his correspondence shows it to have been most natural to his mind—

"The evening weather was so bright, and clear,
That men of health were of unusual cheer.

.
The breezes were ethereal, and pure,
And crept through half-closed lattices to cure
The languid sick; it cool'd their fever'd sleep,
And sooth'd them into slumbers full and deep.
Soon they awoke clear-ey'd: nor burnt with thirsting,
Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting:
And springing up, they met the wond'ring sight
Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight;
Who feel their arms and breasts, and kiss and stare,
And on their placid foreheads part the hair."¹

Finally Keats abandons and breaks off this tentative exordium of his unwritten poem with the cry—

"Cynthia! I cannot tell the greater blisses
That followed thine and thy dear shepherd's kisses;
Was there a poet born? But now no more
My wandering spirit must no farther soar."

¹ Mr. W. T. Arnold in his *Introduction* (p. xxvii.) quotes a parallel passage from Leigh Hunt's *Gentle Armour* as an example of the degree to which Keats was at this time indebted to Hunt: forgetting that the *Gentle Armour* was not written till 1831, and that the debt in this instance is therefore the other way.

Was there a poet born? Is the labour and the reward of poetry really and truly destined to be his? The question is one which recurs in this early volume importunately and in many tones: sometimes with words and cadences closely recalling those of Milton in his boyish *Vacation Exercise*; sometimes with a cry like this, which occurs twice over in the piece called *Sleep and Poetry*:

“O Poesy! for thee I hold my pen,
That am not yet a glorious denizen
Of thy wide heaven;”

and anon, with a less wavering, more confident and daring tone of young ambition—

“But off, Despondence! miserable bane!
They should not know thee, who, athirst to gain
A noble end, are thirsty every hour.
What though I am not wealthy in the dower
Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know
The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow
Hither and thither all the changing thoughts
Of man; though no great ministering reason sorts
Out the dark mysteries of human souls
To clear conceiving; yet there ever rolls
A vast idea before me.”

The feeling expressed in these last lines, the sense of the overmastering pressure and amplitude of an inspiration as yet unrealized and indistinct, gives way in other passages to confident anticipations of fame, and of the place which he will hold in the affections of posterity.

There is obviously a great immaturity and uncertainty in all these outpourings, an intensity and effervescence of emotion out of proportion, as yet, both to the intellectual and the voluntary powers, much confusion of idea, and not a little of expression. Yet even in this first book of Keats

there is much that the lover of poetry will always cherish. Literature, indeed, hardly affords another example of work at once so crude and so attractive. Passages that go to pieces under criticism nevertheless have about them a spirit of beauty and of morning, an abounding young vitality and freshness, that exhilarate and charm us, whether with the sanction of our judgment or without it. And alike at its best and worst, the work proceeds manifestly from a spontaneous and intense poetic impulse. The matter of these early poems of Keats is as fresh and unconventional as their form, springing directly from the native poignancy of his sensations and abundance of his fancy. That his inexperience should always make the most discreet use of its freedom could not be expected; but with all its immaturity his work has strokes already which suggest comparison with the great names of literature. Who much exceeds him, even from the first, but Shakspeare in momentary felicity of touch for nature? and in that charm of morning freshness who but Chaucer? Already, too, we find him showing signs of that capacity for clear and sane self-knowledge which becomes by-and-by so admirable in him. And he has already begun to meditate to good purpose on the aims and methods of his art. He has grasped, and vehemently asserts, the principle that poetry should not strive to enforce particular doctrines, that it should not contend in the field of reason, but that its proper organ is the imagination, and its aim the creation of beauty. With reference to the theory and practice of the poetic art the piece called *Sleep and Poetry* contains one passage which has become classically familiar to all readers. Often as it has been quoted elsewhere, it must be quoted again here, as indispensable to the understanding of the literary atmosphere in which Keats lived:

“Is there so small a range
In the present strength of manhood that the high
Imagination cannot freely fly
As she was wont of old? prepare her steeds;
Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds
Upon the clouds? Has she not shown us all?
From the clear space of ether, to the small
Breath of new buds unfolding? From the meaning
Of Jove’s large eyebrow, to the tender greening
Of April meadows? here her altar shone,
E’en in this isle; and who could paragon
The fervid choir that lifted up a noise
Of harmony, to where it aye will poise
Its mighty self of convoluting sound,
Huge as a planet, and like that roll round,
Eternally around a dizzy void?
Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy’d
With honours; nor had any other care
Than to sing out and soothe their wavy hair.

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a schism
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
Men were thought wise who could not understand
His glories; with a puling infant’s force
They sway’d about upon a rocking-horse,
And thought it Pegasus. Ah, dismal-soul’d!
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll’d
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer night collected still to make
The morning precious: Beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of—were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile; so that ye taught a school
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob’s wit,
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask

Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race !
 That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
 And did not know it—no, they went about,
 Holding a poor, decrepit standard out,
 Mark'd with most flimsy mottoes, and in large
 The name of one Boileau !

O ye whose charge
 It is to hover round our pleasant hills !
 Whose congregated majesty so fills
 My boundly reverence that I cannot trace
 Your hallow'd names in this unholy place,
 So near those common folk ; did not their shames
 Affright you ? Did our old lamenting Thames
 Delight you ? did ye never cluster round
 Delicious Avon with a mournful sound,
 And weep ? Or did ye wholly bid adieu
 To regions where no more the laurel grew ?
 Or did ye stay to give a welcoming
 To some lone spirits who could proudly sing
 Their youth away, and die ? 'Twas even so.
 But let me think away those times of woe :
 Now 'tis a fairer season ; ye have breathed
 Rich benedictions o'er us ; ye have wreathed
 Fresh garlands : for sweet music has been heard
 In many places ; some has been upstirr'd
 From out its crystal dwelling in a lake
 By a swan's ebon bill ; from a thick brake,
 Nested and quiet in a valley mild,
 Bubbles a pipe ; fine sounds are floating wild
 About the earth : happy are ye, and glad."

Both the strength and the weakness of this are typically characteristic of the time and of the man. The passage is likely to remain for posterity the central expression of the spirit of literary emancipation then militant and about to triumph in England. The two great elder captains of revolution, Coleridge and Wordsworth, have both expound-

ed their cause, in prose, with much more maturity of thought and language; Coleridge in the luminous retrospect of the *Biographia Literaria*, Wordsworth in the austere contentions of his famous prefaces. But neither has left any enunciation of theory having power to thrill the ear and haunt the memory like the rhymes of this young untrained recruit in the cause of poetic liberty and the return to nature. It is easy, indeed, to pick these verses of Keats to shreds, if we choose to fix a prosaic and rational attention on their faults. What is it, for instance, that imagination is asked to do? fly, or drive? Is it she, or her steeds, that are to paw up against the light? and why paw? Deeds to be done upon clouds by pawing can hardly be other than strange. What sort of a verb is "I green, thou greenest?" Delight with liberty is very well, but liberty in a poet ought not to include liberties with the parts of speech. Why should the hair of the muses require "soothing?"—if it were their tempers it would be more intelligible. And surely "foppery" belongs to civilization and not to "barbarism;" and a standard-bearer may be decrepit, but not a standard, and a standard flimsy, but not a motto. "Boundly reverence:" what is boundly? And so on without end, if we choose to let the mind assume that attitude. Many minds not indifferent to literature were at that time, and some will at all times be, incapable of any other. Such must naturally turn to the work of the eighteenth-century school, the school of tact and urbane brilliancy and sedulous execution, and think the only "blasphemy" was on the side of the youth who could call, or seem to call, the poet of Belinda and the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* fool and dolt. Byron, in his controversy with Bowles a year or two later, adopted this mode of attack effectively enough, his spleen against a

contemporary finding, as usual, its most convenient weapon in an enthusiasm, partly real and partly affected, for the genius and the methods of Pope. But controversy apart, if we have in us a touch of instinct for the poetry of imagination and beauty, as distinct from that of taste and reason, however clearly we may see the weak points of a passage like this, however much we may wish that taste and reason had had more to do with it, yet we cannot but feel that Keats touches truly the root of the matter; we cannot but admire the elastic life and variety of his verse, his fine spontaneous and effective turns of rhetoric, the ring and power of his appeal to the elements, and the glow of his delight in the achievements and promise of the new age.

His volume, on its appearance, by no means made the impression which his friends had hoped for it. Hunt published a thoroughly judicious, as well as cordial, criticism in the *Examiner*, and several of the provincial papers noticed the book. Haydon wrote in his ranting vein: "I have read your *Sleep and Poetry*—it is a flash of lightning that will rouse men from their occupations, and keep them trembling for the crash of thunder that *will* follow." But people were in fact as far from being disturbed in their occupations as possible. The attention of the reading public was for the moment almost entirely absorbed by men of talent or of genius who played with a more careless, and some of them with a more masterly, touch than Keats as yet, on commoner chords of the human spirit, as Moore, Scott, and Byron. In Keats's volume every one could see the faults, while the beauties appealed only to the poetically minded. It seems to have had a moderate sale at first, but after the first few weeks none at all. The poet, or at all events his brothers for him, were inclined,

apparently with little reason, to blame their friends the publishers for the failure. On the 29th of April we find the brothers Ollier replying to a letter of George Keats in dudgeon: "We regret that your brother ever requested us to publish his book, or that our opinion of its talent should have led us to acquiesce in undertaking it. We are, however, much obliged to you for relieving us from the unpleasant necessity of declining any further connexion with it, which we must have done, as we think the curiosity is satisfied, and the sale has dropped." One of their customers, they go on to say, had, a few days ago, hurt their feelings as men of business and of taste by calling it "no better than a take in."

A fortnight before the date of this letter Keats had left London. Haydon had been urging on him, not injudiciously, the importance of seclusion and concentration of mind. We find him writing to Reynolds soon after the publication of his volume: "My brothers are anxious that I should go by myself into the country; they have always been extremely fond of me, and now that Haydon has pointed out how necessary it is that I should be alone to improve myself, they give up the temporary pleasure of living with me continually for a great good which I hope will follow: so I shall soon be out of town." And on the 14th of April he in fact started for the Isle of Wight, intending to devote himself entirely to study, and to make immediately a fresh start upon *Endymion*.

CHAPTER IV.

Excursion to Isle of Wight, Margate, and Canterbury.—Summer at Hampstead.—New friends: Dilke, Brown, Bailey.—With Bailey at Oxford.—Return: Old Friends at Odds.—Burford Bridge.—Winter at Hampstead.—Wordsworth, Lamb, Hazlitt.—Poetical Activity.—Spring at Teignmouth.—Studies and Anxieties.—Marriage and Emigration of George Keats. [April, 1817—May, 1818.]

As soon as Keats reached the Isle of Wight, on April 16, 1817, he went to see Shanklin and Carisbrooke, and after some hesitation between the two, decided on a lodging at the latter place. The next day he writes to Reynolds that he has spent the morning arranging the books and prints he had brought with him, adding to the latter one of Shakspeare which he had found in the passage, and which had particularly pleased him. He speaks with enthusiasm of the beauties of Shanklin, but in a postscript written the following day mentions that he has been nervous from want of sleep, and much haunted by the passage in *Lear*, "Do you not hear the sea?"—adding without farther preface his own famous sea-sonnet beginning,

"It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand caverns."

In the same postscript Keats continues:

"I find I cannot do without poetry—without eternal poetry; half the day will not do—the whole of it. I began with a little, but habit

has made me a leviathan. I had become all in a tremble from not having written anything of late: the Sonnet overleaf did me good; I slept the better last night for it; this morning, however, I am nearly as bad again. . . . I shall forthwith begin my *Endymion*, which I hope I shall have got some way with before you come, when we will read our verses in a delightful place I have set my heart upon, near the Castle."

The Isle of Wight, however, Keats presently found, did not suit him, and Haydon's prescription of solitude proved too trying. He fell into a kind of fever of thought and sleeplessness which he thought it wisest to try and shake off by flight. Early in May we find him writing to Leigh Hunt from Margate, where he had already stayed the year before, and explaining the reasons of his change of abode. Later in the same letter, endeavouring to measure his own powers against the magnitude of the task to which he has committed himself, he falls into a vein like that which we have seen recurring once and again in his verses during the preceding year, the vein of awed self-questioning, and tragic presentiment uttered half in earnest and half in jest. The next day we find him writing a long and intimate, very characteristic letter to Haydon, signed "Your everlasting friend," and showing the first signs of the growing influence which Haydon was beginning to exercise over him in antagonism to the influence of Leigh Hunt. Keats was quite shrewd enough to feel for himself, after a little while, the touches of vanity, fuss, and affectation, the lack of depth and strength, in the kind and charming nature of Hunt, and quite loyal enough to value his excellences none the less, and hold him in grateful and undiminished friendship. But Haydon, between whom and Hunt there was by degrees arising a coolness, must needs have Keats see things as he saw them. "I love you like my own brother,"

insists he: "beware, for God's sake, of the delusions and sophistications that are ripping up the talents and morality of our friend! He will go out of the world the victim of his own weakness and the dupe of his own self-delusions, with the contempt of his enemies and the sorrow of his friends, and the cause he undertook to support injured by his own neglect of character." There is a lugubrious irony in these words, when we remember how Haydon, a self-deluder indeed, came to realize at last the very fate he here prophesies for another—just when Hunt, the harassing and often sordid, ever brightly borne, troubles of his earlier life left behind him, was passing, surrounded by affection, into the haven of a peaceful and bland old age. But for a time, under the pressure of Haydon's masterful exhortations, we find Keats inclining to take an exaggerated and slightly impatient view of the foibles of his earlier friend.

Among other interesting confessions to be found in Keats's letter to Haydon from Margate is that of the fancy—almost the sense—which often haunted him of dependence on the tutelary genius of Shakspeare:

"I remember your saying that you had notions of a good genius presiding over you. I have lately had the same thought, for things which I do half at random are afterwards confirmed by my judgment in a dozen features of propriety. Is it too daring to fancy Shakspeare this presider? When in the Isle of Wight I met with a Shakspeare in the passage of the house at which I lodged. It comes nearer to my idea of him than any I have seen; I was but there a week, yet the old woman made me take it with me, though I went off in a hurry. Do you not think this ominous of good?"

Next he lays his finger on the great secret flaw in his own nature, describing it in words which the after issue of his life will keep but too vividly and constantly before our

minds: "Truth is, I have a horrid Morbidity of Temperament, which has shown itself at intervals ; it is, I have no doubt, the greatest Enemy and stumbling-block I have to fear ; I may even say, it is likely to be the cause of my disappointment." Was it that, in this seven-months' child of a consumptive mother, some unhealth of mind as well as body was congenital ?—or was it that, along with what seems his Celtic intensity of feeling and imagination, he had inherited a special share of that inward gloom which the reverses of their history have stamped, according to some, on the mind of the Celtic race ? We cannot tell, but certain it is that along with the spirit of delight, ever creating and multiplying images of beauty and joy, there dwelt in Keats's bosom an almost equally busy and inventive spirit of self-torment.

The fit of dejection which led to the remark above quoted had its immediate cause in apprehensions of money difficulties conveyed to Keats in a letter from his brother George. The trust funds of which Mr. Abbey had the disposal for the benefit of the orphans, under the deed executed by Mrs. Jennings, amounted approximately to £8000,¹ of which the capital was divisible among them on their coming of age, and the interest was to be applied to their maintenance in the meantime. But the interest of John's share had been insufficient for his professional and other expenses during his term of medical study at Edmonton and London, and much of his capital had been anticipated to meet them : presumably in the form of loans raised on the security of his expectant share. Similar advances had also been for some time necessary to the invalid Tom for his support, and latterly—since he left the employment of Mr. Abbey—to George as well. It is

¹ See Appendix, p. 219.

clear that the arrangements for obtaining these advances were made both wastefully and grudgingly. It is further plain that the brothers were very insufficiently informed of the state of their affairs. In the meantime John Keats was already beginning to discount his expectations from literature. Before or about the time of his rupture with the Olliers he had made the acquaintance of those excellent men, Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, who were shortly, as publishers of the *London Magazine*, to gather about them on terms of cordial friendship a group of contributors comprising more than half the choicest spirits of the day. With them, especially with Mr. Taylor, who was himself a student and writer of independent, somewhat eccentric ability and research, Keats's relations were excellent from first to last, generous on their part, and affectionate and confidential on his. He had made arrangements with them, apparently before leaving London, for the eventual publication of *Endymion*, and from Margate we find him acknowledging a first payment received in advance. Now and again afterwards he turns to the same friends for help at a pinch, adding once, "I am sure you are confident of my responsibility, and of the sense of squareness that is always in me;" nor did they at any time belie his expectation.

From Margate, where he had already made good progress with *Endymion*, Keats went with his brother Tom to spend some time at Canterbury. Thence they moved, early in the summer, to lodgings kept by a Mr. and Mrs. Bentley in Well Walk, Hampstead, where the three brothers had decided to take up their abode together. Here he continued through the summer to work steadily at *Endymion*, being now well advanced with the second book; and some of his friends, as Haydon, Cowden Clarke, and Severn, remembered all their lives afterwards the occasions when

they walked with him on the heath, while he repeated to them, in his rich and tremulous, half-chanting tone, the newly written passages which best pleased him. From his poetical absorption and Elysian dreams they were accustomed to see him at a touch come back to daily life; sometimes to sympathize heart and soul with their affairs, sometimes in a burst of laughter, nonsense, and puns (it was a punning age, and the Keatses were a very punning family), sometimes with a sudden flash of his old schoolboy pug-nacity and fierceness of righteous indignation. To this summer or the following winter, it is not quite certain which, belongs the well-known story of his thrashing in stand-up fight a stalwart young butcher whom he had found tormenting a cat (a "ruffian in livery," according to one account, but the butcher version is the best attested).

For the rest, the choice of Hampstead as a place of residence had much to recommend it to Keats: the freshness of the air for the benefit of the invalid Tom; for his own walks and meditations those beauties of heath, field, and wood, interspersed with picturesque embosomed habitations, which his imagination could transmute at will into the landscapes of Arcadia, or into those, "with high romances blent," of an earlier England or of fable-land. For society there was the convenient proximity to, and yet seclusion from, London, together with the immediate neighbourhood of one or two intimate friends. Among these, Keats frequented as familiarly as ever the cottage in the Vale of Health where Leigh Hunt was still living—a kind of self-appointed poet-laureate of Hampstead, the features of which he was for ever celebrating, now in sonnets and now in the cheerful singsong of his familiar *Epistles*:

"And yet how can I touch, and not linger awhile
On the spot that has haunted my youth like a smile?"

On its fine breathing prospects, its clump-wooded glades,
Dark pines, and white houses, and long-alley'd shades,
With fields going down, where the bard lies and sees
The hills up above him with roofs in the trees."

Several effusions of this kind, with three sonnets addressed to Keats himself, some translations from the Greek, and a not ungraceful mythological poem, the *Nymphs*, were published early in the following year by Leigh Hunt in a volume called *Foliage*, which helped to draw down on him and his friends the lash of Tory criticism.

Near the foot of the heath, in the opposite direction from Hunt's cottage, lived two new friends of Keats who had been introduced to him by Reynolds, and with whom he was soon to become extremely intimate. These were Charles Wentworth Dilke and Charles Armitage Brown (or plain Charles Brown, as he at this time styled himself). Dilke was a young man of twenty-nine, by birth belonging to a younger branch of the Dilkes of Maxstoke Castle, by profession a clerk in the Navy Pay-office, and by opinions at this time a firm disciple of Godwin. He soon gave himself up altogether to literary and antiquarian studies, and lived, as every one knows, to be one of the most accomplished and influential of English critics and journalists, and for many years editor and chief owner of the *Athenæum*. No two men could well be more unlike in mind than Dilke and Keats: Dilke positive, bent on certainty, and unable, as Keats says, "to feel he has a personal identity unless he has made up his mind about everything;" while Keats, on his part, held that "the only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing—to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts." Nevertheless, the two took to each other and became fast friends. Dilke had married young, and built

himself, a year or two before Keats knew him, a modest semi-detached house in a good-sized garden near the lower end of Hampstead Heath, at the bottom of what is now John Street: the other part of the same block being built and inhabited by his friend Charles Brown. This Brown was the son of a Scotch stockbroker living in Lambeth. He was born in 1786, and while almost a boy went out to join one of his brothers in a merchant's business at St. Petersburg; but the business failing, he returned to England in 1808, and lived as he could for the next few years, until the death of another brother put him in possession of a small competency. He had a taste, and some degree of talent, for literature, and held strongly Radical opinions. In 1810 he wrote an opera on a Russian subject, called *Narensky*, which was brought out at the Lyceum, with Braham in the principal part; and at intervals during the next twenty years many criticisms, tales, and translations from the Italian, chiefly printed in the various periodicals edited by Leigh Hunt. When Keats first knew him, Brown was a young man already of somewhat middle-aged appearance, stout, bald, and spectacled—a kindly companion, and jovial, somewhat free liver, with a good measure both of obstinacy and caution lying in reserve, *more Scotico*, under his pleasant and convivial outside. It is clear by his relations with Keats that his heart was warm, and that when once attached, he was capable not only of appreciation but of devotion. After the poet's death Brown went to Italy, and became the friend of Trelawney, whom he helped with the composition of the *Adventures of a Younger Son*, and of Landor, at whose villa near Florence Lord Houghton first met him in 1832. Two years later he returned to England, and settled at Plymouth, where he continued to occupy himself with litera-

ture and journalism, and particularly with his chief work, an essay, ingenious and in part sound, on the autobiographical poems of Shakspeare. Thoughts of Keats, and a wish to be his biographer, never left him, until in 1841 he resolved suddenly to emigrate to New Zealand, and departed leaving his materials in Lord Houghton's hands. A year afterwards he died of apoplexy at the settlement of New Plymouth, now called Taranaki.¹

Yet another friend of Reynolds, who in these months attached himself with a warm affection to Keats, was Benjamin Bailey, an Oxford undergraduate reading for the Church, afterwards Archdeacon of Colombo. Bailey was a great lover of books, devoted especially to Milton among past and to Wordsworth among present poets. For his earnestness and integrity of character Keats conceived a strong respect, and a hearty liking for his person, and much of what was best in his own nature, and deepest in his mind and cogitations, was called out in the intercourse that ensued between them. In the course of this summer, 1817, Keats had been invited by Shelley to stay with him at Great Marlow, and Hunt, ever anxious that the two young poets should be friends, pressed him strongly to accept the invitation. It is said by Medwin, but the statement is not confirmed by other evidence, that Shelley and Keats had set about their respective "summer tasks," the composition of *Laon and Cythna* and of *Endymion*, by mutual agreement and in a spirit of friendly rivalry.

¹ The facts and dates relating to Brown in the above paragraph were furnished by his son, still living in New Zealand, to Mr. Leslie Stephen, from whom I have them. The point about the *Adventures of a Younger Son* is confirmed by the fact that the mottoes in that work are mostly taken from the Keats MSS., then in Brown's hands, especially *Otho*.

Keats, at any rate, declined his brother poet's invitation, in order, as he said, that he might have his own unfettered scope. Later in the same summer, while his brothers were away on a trip to Paris, he accepted an invitation of Bailey to come to Oxford, and stayed there during the last five or six weeks of the Long Vacation. Here he wrote the third book of *Endymion*, working steadily every morning, and composing with great facility his regular average of fifty lines a day. The afternoons they would spend in walking or boating on the Isis, and Bailey has feelingly recorded the pleasantness of their days, and of their discussions on life, literature, and the mysteries of things. He tells of the sweetness of Keats's temper and charm of his conversation, and of the gentleness and respect with which the hot young liberal and free-thinker would listen to his host's exposition of his own orthodox convictions; describes his enthusiasm in quoting Chatterton and in dwelling on passages of Wordsworth's poetry, particularly from the *Tintern Abbey* and the *Ode on Immortality*; and recalls his disquisitions on the harmony of numbers and other technicalities of his art, the power of his thrilling looks and low-voiced recitations, his vividness of inner life, and intensity of quiet enjoyment during their field and river rambles and excursions.¹ One special occasion of pleasure was a pilgrimage they made together to Stratford-on-Avon. From Oxford are some of the letters written by Keats in his happiest vein: to Reynolds, and his sister Miss Jane Reynolds, afterwards Mrs. Tom Hood; to Haydon; and to his young sister Frances Mary, or Fanny, as she was always called (now Mrs. Llanos). George Keats, writing to this sister after John's death, speaks of the times "when we lived with our grandmother at Edmon-

¹ Houghton MSS.

ton, and John, Tom, and myself were always devising plans to amuse you, jealous lest you should prefer either of us to the others." Since those times Keats had seen little of her, Mr. Abbey having put her to a boarding-school before her grandmother's death, and afterwards taken her into his own house at Walthamstow, where the visits of her poet brother were not encouraged. "He often," writes Bailey, "spoke to me of his sister, who was somehow withholden from him, with great delicacy and tenderness of affection;" and from this time forward we find him maintaining with her a correspondence which shows his character in its most attractive light. He bids her keep all his letters and he will keep hers—"and thus in the course of time we shall each of us have a good bundle—which hereafter, when things may have strangely altered, and God knows what happened, we may read over together and look with pleasure on times past—that now are to come." He tells her about Oxford and about his work, and gives her a sketch of the story of *Endymion*—"but I dare say you have read this and all other beautiful tales which have come down to us from the ancient times of that beautiful Greece."

Early in October Keats returned to Hampstead, whence he writes to Bailey, noticing with natural indignation the ruffianly first article of the *Cockney School* series, which had just appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* for that month. In this the special object of attack was Leigh Hunt, but there were allusions to Keats which seemed to indicate that his own turn was coming. What made him more seriously uneasy were signs of discord springing up among his friends, and of attempts on the part of some of them to set him against others. Haydon had now given up his studio in Great Marlborough Street for one in Lis-

son Grove; and Hunt, having left the Vale of Health, was living close by him at a lodging in the same street. "I know nothing of anything in this part of the world," writes Keats: "everybody seems at loggerheads." And he goes on to say how Hunt and Haydon are on uncomfortable terms, and "live, *pour ainsi dire*, jealous neighbours. Haydon says to me, 'Keats, don't show your lines to Hunt on any account, or he will have done half for you'—so it appears Hunt wishes it to be thought." With more accounts of warnings he had received from common friends that Hunt was not feeling or speaking cordially about *Endymion*. "Now is not all this a most paltry thing to think about? . . . This is, to be sure, but the vexation of a day; nor would I say so much about it to any but those whom I know to have my welfare and reputation at heart."¹ When, three months later, Keats showed Hunt the first book of his poem in proof, the latter found many faults. It is clear he was to some extent honestly disappointed in the work itself. He may also have been chagrined at not having been taken more fully into confidence during its composition; and what he said to others was probably due partly to such chagrin, partly to nervousness on behalf of his friend's reputation: for of double-facedness or insincerity in friendship we know by a hundred evidences that Hunt was incapable. Keats, however, after what he had heard, was by no means without excuse when he wrote to his brothers concerning Hunt—not unkindly, or making much of the matter—"the fact is, he and Shelley are hurt, and perhaps justly, at my not having showed them the affair officiously; and from several hints I have had, they appear much disposed to dissect and anatomize any trip or slip I may have made. But

¹ See Appendix, p. 222.

who's afraid?" Keats was not the man to let this kind of thing disturb seriously his relations with a friend; and writing about the same time to Bailey, still concerning the dissensions in the circle, he expounds the practical philosophy of friendship with truly admirable good sense and feeling:

"Things have happened lately of great perplexity; you must have heard of them; Reynolds and Haydon retorting and recriminating, and parting forever. The same thing has happened between Haydon and Hunt. It is unfortunate: men should bear with each other; there lives not the man who may not be cut up, aye, lashed to pieces, on his weakest side. The best of men have but a portion of good in them—a kind of spiritual yeast in their frames, which creates the ferment of existence—by which a man is propelled to act and strive, and buffet with circumstance. The sure way, Bailey, is first to know a man's faults, and then be passive. If after that he insensibly draws you towards him, then you have no power to break the link. Before I felt interested in either Reynolds or Haydon, I was well-read in their faults; yet, knowing them both, I have been cementing gradually with both. I have an affection for them both, for reasons almost opposite; and to both must I of necessity cling, supported always by the hope that when a little time, a few years, shall have tried me more fully in their esteem, I may be able to bring them together. This time must come, because they have both hearts; and they will recollect the best parts of each other when this gust is overblown."

Keats had, in the meantime, been away on another autumn excursion into the country: this time to Burford Bridge, near Dorking. Here he passed pleasantly the latter part of November, much absorbed in the study of Shakspeare's minor poems and sonnets, and in the task of finishing *Endymion*. He had thus all but succeeded in carrying out the hope which he had expressed in the opening passage of the poem:

"Many and many a verse I hope to write,
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,

Hide in deep herbage ; and ere yet the bees
Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
I must be near the middle of my story.
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
See it half finished ; but let Autumn bold,
With universal tinge of sober gold,
Be all about me when I make an end."

Returning to Hampstead, Keats spent the first part of the winter in comparative rest from literary work. His chief occupation was in revising and seeing *Endymion* through the press, with much help from the publisher, Mr. Taylor, varied by occasional essays in dramatic criticism, and as the spring began, by the composition of a number of minor incidental poems. In December he lost the companionship of his brothers, who went to winter in Devonshire for the sake of Tom's health. But in other company he was at this time mixing freely. The convivial gatherings of the young men of his own circle were frequent, the fun high, the discussions on art and literature boisterous, and varied with a moderate, evidently never a very serious, amount of card-playing, drinking, and dissipation. From these gatherings Keats was indispensable, and more than welcome in the sedate literary circle of his publishers, Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, men as strict in conduct and opinion as they were good-hearted. His social relations began, indeed, in the course of this winter to extend themselves more than he much cared about, or thought consistent with proper industry. We find him dining with Horace Smith in company with some fashionable wits, concerning whom he reflects: "They only served to convince me how superior humour is to wit in respect to enjoyment. These men say things which make one start, without making one feel; they are all alike; their manners are alike;

they all know fashionables; they have all a mannerism in their very eating and drinking, in their mere handling a decanter. They talked of Kean and his low company. 'Would I were with that company instead of yours,' said I to myself." Men of ardent and deep natures, whether absorbed in the realities of experience or in the ideals of art and imagination, are apt to be affected in this way by the conventional social sparkle which is only struck from and only illuminates the surface. Hear, on the other hand, with what pleasure and insight, what sympathy of genius for genius, Keats writes after seeing the great tragedian last mentioned interpret the inner and true passions of the soul:

"The sensual life of verse springs warm from the lips of Kean. . . . His tongue must seem to have robbed the Hybla bees and left them honeyless! There is an indescribable *gusto* in his voice, by which we feel that the utterer is thinking of the past and future while speaking of the instant. When he says in Othello, 'Put up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them,' we feel that his throat had commanded where swords were as thick as reeds. From eternal risk, he speaks as though his body were unassailable. Again, his exclamation of 'blood! blood! blood!' is direful and slaughterous to the last degree; the very words appear stained and gory. His nature hangs over them, making a prophetic repast. The voice is loosed on them, like the wild dogs on the savage relics of an eastern conflict; and we can distinctly hear it 'gorging and growling o'er carcase and limb.' In Richard, 'Be stirring with the lark to-morrow, gentle Norfolk!' came from him as through the morning atmosphere towards which he yearns."

It was in the Christmas weeks of 1817-18 that Keats undertook the office of theatrical critic for the *Champion* newspaper in place of Reynolds, who was away at Exeter. Early in January he writes to his brothers of the pleasure he has had in seeing their sister, who had been brought to

London for the Christmas holidays, and tells them how he has called on and been asked to dine by Wordsworth, whom he had met on the 28th of December at a supper given by Haydon. This is the famous Sunday supper, or "immortal dinner," as Haydon calls it, which is described at length in one of the most characteristic passages of the painter's *Autobiography*. Besides Wordsworth and Keats and the host, there were present Charles Lamb and Monkhouse. "Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats's eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour, so speeded the stream of conversation," says Haydon, "that I never passed a more delightful time." Later in the evening came in Ritchie, the African traveller, just about to start on the journey to Fezzan on which he died, besides a self-invited guest in the person of one Kingston, Comptroller of Stamps, a foolish, good-natured gentleman, recommended only by his admiration for Wordsworth. Presently Lamb, getting fuddled, lost patience with the platitudes of Mr. Kingston, and began making fun of him, with pranks and personalities which to Haydon appeared hugely funny, but which Keats, in his letter to his brothers, mentions with less relish, saying, "Lamb got tipsy and blew up Kingston, proceeding so far as to take the candle across the room, hold it to his face, and show us what a soft fellow he was."¹ Keats saw Wordsworth often in the next few weeks after their introduction at Haydon's, but has left us no personal impressions of the elder poet, except a passing one of surprise at finding him one day preparing to dine, in a stiff collar and his smartest clothes, with his aforesaid unlucky admirer, Mr. Comptroller Kingston. We know from other sources that he was once persuaded to recite to Wordsworth the Hymn to Pan

¹ See Appendix, p. 222.

from *Endymion*. "A pretty piece of Paganism," remarked Wordsworth, according to his usual encouraging way with a brother poet; and Keats was thought to have winced under the frigidity. Independently of their personal relations, the letters of Keats show that Wordsworth's poetry continued to be much in his thoughts throughout these months, what he has to say of it varying according to the frame of mind in which he writes. In the enthusiastic mood he declares, and within a few days again insists, that there are three things to rejoice at in the present age: "The *Excursion*, Haydon's Pictures, and Hazlitt's depth of Taste." This mention of the name of Hazlitt brings us to another intellectual influence which somewhat powerfully affected Keats at this time. On the liberal side in politics and criticism there was no more effective or more uncertain free lance than that eloquent and splenetic writer, with his rich, singular, contradictory gifts, his intellect equally acute and fervid, his temperament both enthusiastic and morose, his style at once rich and incisive. The reader acquainted with Hazlitt's manner will easily recognize its influence on Keats in the fragment of stage criticism above quoted. Hazlitt was at this time delivering his course of lectures on the English poets at the Surrey Institution, and Keats was among his regular attendants. With Hazlitt personally, as with Lamb, his intercourse at Haydon's and elsewhere seems to have been frequent and friendly, but not intimate; and Haydon complains that it was only after the death of Keats that he could get Hazlitt to acknowledge his genius.

Of Haydon himself, and of his powers as a painter, we see by the words above quoted that Keats continued to think as highly as ever. He had, as Severn assures us, a keen natural instinct for the arts both of painting and mu-

sic. Cowden Clarke's piano-playing had been a delight to him at school, and he tells us himself how from a boy he had in his mind's eye visions of pictures: "When a school-boy, the abstract idea I had of an heroic painting was what I cannot describe. I saw it somewhat sideways—large, prominent, round, and coloured with magnificence—somewhat like the feel I have of Anthony and Cleopatra. Or of Alcibiades leaning on his crimson couch in his galley, his broad shoulders imperceptibly heaving with the sea." In Haydon's pictures Keats continued to see, as the friends and companions of every ardent and persuasive worker in the arts are apt to see, not so much the actual performance as the idea he had preconceived of it in the light of his friend's intentions and enthusiasm. At this time Haydon, who had already made several drawings of Keats's head in order to introduce it in his picture of Christ entering Jerusalem, proposed to make another more finished, "to be engraved," writes Keats, "in the first style, and put at the head of my poem, saying, at the same time, he had never done the thing for any human being, and that it must have considerable effect, as he will put his name to it." Both poet and publisher were delighted with this condescension on the part of the sublime Haydon, who failed, however, to carry out his promise. "My neglect," said Haydon, long afterwards, "really gave him a pang, as it now does me."

With Hunt, also, Keats's intercourse continued frequent, while with Reynolds his intimacy grew daily closer. Both of these friendships had a stimulating influence on his poetic powers. "The Wednesday before last, Shelley, Hunt, and I wrote each a sonnet on the river Nile," he tells his brothers on the 16th of February, 1818. "I have been writing at intervals many songs and sonnets, and I

long to be at Teignmouth to read them over to you." With the help of Keats's manuscripts, or of the transcripts made from them by his friends, it is possible to retrace the actual order of many of these fugitive pieces. On the 16th of January was written the humorous sonnet on Mrs. Reynolds's cat; on the 21st, after seeing in Leigh Hunt's possession a lock of hair reputed to be Milton's, the address to that poet beginning "Chief of organic numbers!" and on the 22d the sonnet, "O golden-tongued Romance with serene lute," in which Keats describes himself as laying aside (apparently) his Spenser in order to read again the more rousing and human-passionate pages of *Lear*. On the 31st he sends in a letter to Reynolds the lines to Apollo beginning "Hence Burgundy, Claret, and Port," and in the same letter the sonnet beginning "When I have fears that I may cease to be," which he calls his last. On the 3d of February he wrote the spirited lines to Robin Hood, suggested by a set of sonnets by Reynolds on Sherwood Forest; on the 4th the sonnet beginning "Time's sea has been five years at its slow ebb," in which he recalls the memory of an old, otherwise unrecorded love-fancy, and also the well-known sonnet on the Nile, written at Hunt's in competition with that friend and with Shelley; on the 5th another sonnet postponing compliance for the present with an invitation of Leigh Hunt's to compose something in honour, or in emulation, of Spenser; and on the 8th the sonnet in praise of the colour blue, composed by way of protest against one of Reynolds. About the same time Keats agreed with Reynolds that they should each write some metrical tales from Boccaccio, and publish them in a joint volume, and began at once for his own part with *Isabella* or *the Pot of Basil*. A little later in this so prolific month of February we find him rejoic-

ing in the song of the thrush and blackbird, and melted into feelings of indolent pleasure and receptivity under the influence of spring winds and dissolving rain. He theorizes pleasantly in a letter to Reynolds on the virtues and benefits of this state of mind, translating the thrush's music into some blank-verse lines of a singular and haunting melody. In the course of the next fortnight we find him in correspondence with Taylor about the corrections to *Endymion*, and soon afterwards making a clearance of borrowed books, and otherwise preparing to flit. His brother George, who had been taking care of Tom at Teignmouth since December, was now obliged to come to town, bent on a scheme of marriage and emigration; and Tom's health having made a momentary rally, Keats was unwilling that he should leave Teignmouth, and determined to join him there. He started in the second week of March, and stayed almost two months. It was an unlucky season for weather—the soft-buffeting sheets and misty drifts of Devonshire rain renewing themselves, in the inexhaustible way all lovers of that country know, throughout almost the whole spring, and preventing him from getting more than occasional tantalizing snatches of enjoyment in the beauty of the scenery, the walks, and flowers. His letters are full of objurgations against the climate, conceived in a spirit which seems hardly compatible, in one of his strong family feeling, with the tradition which represents his father to have been a Devonshire man :

“ You may say what you will of Devonshire : the truth is, it is a splashy, rainy, misty, snowy, foggy, haily, floody, muddy, slipshod county. The hills are very beautiful, when you get a sight of 'em ; the primroses are out—but then you are in ; the cliffs are of a fine deep colour, but then the clouds are continually vieing with them . . .

I fancy the very air of a deteriorating quality. I fancy the flowers, all precocious, have an Acrasian spell about them; I feel able to beat off the Devonshire waves like soap-froth. I think it well for the honour of Britain that Julius Cæsar did not first land in this county. A Devonshirer, standing on his native hills, is not a distinct object; he does not show against the light; a wolf or two would dispossess him.”¹

Besides his constant occupation in watching and cheering his invalid brother, who had a relapse just after he came down, Keats was busy during these Devonshire days seeing through the press the last sheets of *Endymion*. He also composed, with the exception of the few verses he had begun at Hampstead, the whole of *Isabella*, the first of his longer poems written with real maturity of art and certainty of touch. At the same time he was reading and appreciating Milton as he had never done before. With the minor poems he had been familiar from a boy, but had not been attracted by *Paradise Lost* until first Severn, and then more energetically Bailey, had insisted that this was a reproach to him; and he now turned to that poem, and penetrated with the grasp and swiftness of genius, as his marginal criticisms show, into the very essence of its power and beauty. His correspondence with his friends, particularly Bailey and Reynolds, is, during this same time, unusually sustained and full. It was in all senses manifestly a time with Keats of rapidly maturing power, and in some degree also of threatening gloom. The mysteries of existence and of suffering, and the “deeps of good and evil,” were beginning for the first time to press habitually on his thoughts. In that beautiful and interesting letter to Reynolds, in which he makes the comparison of human life to a mansion of many apartments, it is his own present state which he thus describes:

¹ See Appendix, p. 222.

"We no sooner get into the second chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere. We see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there forever in delight. However, among the effects this breathing is father of, is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of man, of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness, and oppression, whereby this Chamber of Maiden-thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages. We see not the balance of good and evil; we are in a mist, *we* are in that state, we feel the 'Burden of the Mystery.'"

A few weeks earlier, addressing to the same friend the last of his rhymed *Epistles*, Keats had thus expressed the mood which came upon him as he sat taking the beauty of the evening on a rock at the sea's edge :

"'Twas a quiet eve,
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam
Along the flat brown sand; I was at home,
And should have been most happy—but I saw
Too far into the sea, where every maw
The greater or the less feeds evermore:
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction,
And so from happiness I far was gone.
Still am I sick of it, and tho' to-day
I've gathered young spring leaves, and flowers gay
Of periwinkle and wild strawberry,
Still do I that most fierce destruction see—
The Shark at savage prey, the Hawk at pounce,
The gentle Robin, like a Pard or Ounce,
Ravening a worm. Away, ye horrid moods!
Moods of one's mind!"

In a like vein, recalling to Bailey a chance saying of his,
"Why should woman suffer?"—"Aye, why should she?"

writes Keats. "‘By heavens, I’d coin my very soul, and drop my blood for drachmas.’ These things are, and he who feels how incompetent the most skyeey knight-errantry is to heal this bruised fairness, is like a sensitive leaf on the hot hand of thought." And again, "Were it in my choice, I would reject a Petrarchal coronation—on account of my dying day, and because women have cancers. I should not by rights speak in this tone to you, for it is an incendiary spirit that would do so."

Not the general tribulations of the race only, but particular private anxieties, were pressing in these days on Keats’s thoughts. The shadow of illness, though it had hitherto scarcely touched himself, hung menacingly not only over his brother but his best friends. He speaks of it in a tone of courage and gayety which his real apprehensions, we can feel, belie. "Banish money"—he had written in Falstaff’s vein, at starting for the Isle of Wight a year ago—"Banish sofas—Banish wine—Banish music; but right Jack Health, honest Jack Health, true Jack Health—Banish Health and Banish all the world." Writing now from Teignmouth to Reynolds, who was down during these weeks with rheumatic fever, he complains laughingly, but with an undercurrent of sad foreboding, how he can go nowhere but Sickness is of the company, and says his friends will have to cut that fellow, or he must cut them.

Nearer and more pressing than such apprehensions was the pain of a family break-up now imminent. George Keats had made up his mind to emigrate to America, and embark his capital, or as much of it as he could get possession of, in business there. Besides the wish to push his own fortunes, a main motive of this resolve on George’s part was the desire to be in a position as quickly as possi-

ble to help, or, if need be, support his poet-brother. He persuaded the girl to whom he had long been attached, Miss Wylie, to share his fortunes, and it was settled that they were to be married and sail early in the summer. Keats came up from Teignmouth in May to see the last of his brother, and he and Tom settled again in their old lodgings in Well Walk. He had a warm affection and regard for his new sister-in-law, and was in so far delighted for George's sake. But at the same time he felt life and its prospects overcast. He writes to Bailey, after his outburst about the sufferings of women, that he is never alone now without rejoicing that there is such a thing as death—without placing his ultimate in the glory of dying for a great human purpose. And after recounting his causes of depression he recovers himself, and concludes: "Life must be undergone; and I certainly derive some consolation from the thought of writing one or two more poems before it ceases."

With reference to his poem then just appearing, and the year's work it represented, Keats was under no illusions whatever. From an early period in its composition he had fully realised its imperfections, and had written: "My ideas of it are very low, and I would write the subject thoroughly again but I am tired of it, and think the time would be better spent in writing a new romance, which I have in my eye for next summer. Rome was not built in a day, and all the good I expect from my employment this summer is the fruit of experience which I hope to gather in my next poem." The habit of close self-observation and self-criticism is in most natures that possess it allied with vanity and egoism; but it was not so in Keats, who, without a shadow of affectation, judges himself, both in his strength and weakness, as the most clear-sighted and

disinterested friend might judge. He shows himself perfectly aware that in writing *Endymion* he has rather been working off a youthful ferment of the mind than producing a sound or satisfying work of poetry; and when the time comes to write a preface to the poem, after a first attempt lacking reticence and simplicity, and abandoned at the advice of Reynolds, he in the second quietly and beautifully says of his own work all that can justly be said in its dispraise. He warns the reader to expect "great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplished;" and adds most unboastfully: "It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live."

The apprehensions expressed in these words have not been fulfilled; and *Endymion*, so far from having died away, lives to illustrate the maxim conveyed in its own now proverbial opening line. Immature as the poem truly is in touch and method, superabundant and confused as are the sweets which it offers to the mind, still it is a thing of far too much beauty, or at least of too many beauties, to perish. Every reader must take pleasure in some of its single passages and episodes, while to the student of the poetic art the work is interesting almost as much in its weakness as its strength.

CHAPTER V.

Endymion.

IN the old Grecian world, the myth of Endymion and Selene was one deeply rooted in various shapes in the popular traditions both of Elis in the Peloponnese, and of the Ionian cities about the Latmian gulf in Caria. The central feature of the tale, as originally sung by Sappho, was the nightly descent of the goddess to kiss her lover where he lay spell-bound, by the grace of Zeus, in everlasting sleep and everlasting youth on Mount Latmos. The poem of Sappho is lost, and the story is not told at length in any of our extant classical writings, but only by way of allusion in some of the poets, as Theocritus, Apollonius Rhodius, and Ovid, and of the late prose-writers, as Lucian, Apollodorus, and Pausanias. Of such ancient sources Keats, of course, knew only what he found in his classical dictionaries. But references to the tale, as every one knows, form part of the stock repertory of classical allusion in modern literature; and several modern writers before Keats had attempted to handle the subject at length. In his own special range of Elizabethan reading he was probably acquainted with Lyly's court comedy of *Endimion*, in prose, which had been edited, as it happened, by his friend Dilke a few years before; but in it he would have found nothing to his purpose. On the other hand, I think he certainly took hints from the *Man*

in the *Moon* of Michael Drayton. In this piece Drayton takes hold of two post-classical notions concerning the Endymion myth, both in the first instance derived from Lucian—one, that which identifies its hero with the visible "man in the moon" of popular fancy, the other, that which rationalises his story, and explains him away as a personification or mythical representative of early astronomy. These two distinct notions Drayton weaves together into a short tale in rhymed heroics, which he puts into the mouth of a shepherd at a feast of Pan. Like most of his writings, the *Man in the Moon* has strong gleams of poetry and fancy amidst much that is both puerile and pedantic. Critics, so far as I know, have overlooked Keats's debt to it; but even granting that he may well have got elsewhere, or invented for himself, the notion of introducing his story with a festival in honour of Pan, do not, at any rate, the following lines of Drayton contain evidently the hint for the wanderings on which Keats sends his hero (and for which antiquity affords no warrant) through earth, sea, and air?¹

"Endymion now forsakes

All the delights that shepherds do prefer,
And sets his mind so generally on her
That, all neglected, to the groves and springs
He follows Phœbe, that him safely brings
(As their great queen) unto the nymphish bowers,
Where in clear rivers beautified with flowers
The silver Naidess bathe them in the brackes.
Sometime with her the sea-horse he doth back
Among the blue Nereides; and when,
Weary of waters, goddess-like again

¹ In the extract I have modernized Drayton's spelling and endeavoured to mend his punctuation: his grammatical constructions are past mending.

- She the high mountains actively assays,
 And there amongst the light Oriades,
 That ride the swift roes, Phœbe doth resort:
 Sometime amongst those that with them comport
 The Hamadriades doth the woods frequent;
 And there she stays not, but incontinent
 Calls down the dragons that her chariot draw,
 • And with Endymion pleased that she saw,
 Mounteth thereon, in twinkling of an eye
 Stripping the winds—”

Fletcher, again—a writer with whom Keats was very familiar, and whose inspiration in the idyllic and lyric parts of his work is closely kindred to his own—Fletcher in the *Faithful Shepherdess* makes Chloe tell, in lines beautifully paraphrased and amplified from Theocritus,

“How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
 First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
 She took eternal fire that never dies;
 How she convey'd him softly in a sleep,
 His temples bound with poppy, to the steep
 Head of old Latmus, where she stoops each night,
 Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
 To kiss her sweetest.”

The subject thus touched by Drayton and Fletcher had been long, as we have seen already, in Keats's thoughts. Not only had the charm of this old pastoral nature-myth of the Greeks interwoven itself in his being with his natural sensibility to the physical and spiritual spell of moonlight, but deeper and more abstract meanings than its own had gathered about the story in his mind. The divine vision which haunts Endymion in dreams is for Keats symbolical of Beauty itself, and it is the passion of the human soul for beauty which he attempts, more or less

consciously, to shadow forth in the quest of the shepherd-prince after his love.¹

The manner in which Keats set about relating the Greek story, as he had thus conceived it, was as far from being a Greek or "classical" manner as possible. He indeed resembles the Greeks, as we have seen, in his vivid sense of the joyous and multitudinous life of nature; and he loved to follow them in dreaming of the powers of nature as embodied in concrete shapes of supernatural human activity and grace. Moreover, his intuitions for every kind of beauty being admirably swift and true, when he sought to conjure up visions of the classic past, or images from classic fable, he was able to do so often magically well. To this extent Keats may justly be called, as he has been so often called, a Greek, but no farther. The rooted artistic instincts of that race, the instincts which taught them in all the arts alike, during the years when their genius was most itself, to select and simplify, rejecting all beauties but the vital and essential, and paring away their material to the quick that the main masses might stand out unconfused, in just proportions and with outlines rigorously clear—these instincts had neither been implanted in Keats by nature, nor brought home to him by precept and example. Alike by his aims and his gifts, he was in his workmanship essentially "romantic," Gothic, English. A general characteristic of his favourite Elizabethan poetry is its prodigality of incidental and superfluous beauties: even in the drama it takes the powers of a Shakspeare to keep the vital play of character and passion unsmothered by them, and in most narrative poems of the age the quality is quite unchecked. To Keats, at

¹ Mrs. Owen was, I think, certainly right in her main conception of an allegoric purpose vaguely underlying Keats's narrative.

the time when he wrote *Endymion*, such incidental and secondary luxuriance constituted an essential, if not the chief, charm of poetry. "I think poetry," he says, "should surprise by a fine excess;" and with reference to his own poem during its progress, "It will be a test, a trial of my powers of imagination, and chiefly of my invention—which is a rare thing indeed—by which I must make 4000 lines of one bare circumstance, and fill them with poetry."

The "one bare circumstance" of the story was in the result expanded through four long books of intricate and flowery narrative, in the course of which the young poet pauses continually to linger or deviate, amplifying every incident into a thousand circumstances, every passion into a world of subtleties. He interweaves with his central *Endymion* myth whatever others pleased him best, as those of Pan, of Venus and Adonis, of Cybele, of Alpheus and Arethusa, of Glaucus and Scylla, of Circe, of Neptune, and of Bacchus, leading us through labyrinthine transformations, and on endless journeyings by subterranean antres and ærial gulfs and over the floor of ocean. The scenery of the tale, indeed, is often not merely of a Gothic vastness and intricacy; there is something of Oriental bewilderment—an Arabian Nights jugglery with space and time—in the vague suddenness with which its changes are effected. Such organic plan as the poem has can best be traced by fixing our attention on the main divisions adopted by the author of his narrative into books, and by keeping hold at the same time, wherever we can, of the thread of allegoric thought and purpose that seems to run loosely through the whole. The first book, then, is entirely introductory, and does no more than set forth the predicament of the love-sick shepherd-prince, its hero, who appears at a festival of his people held in honour of the

god Pan, and is afterwards induced by his sister Peona¹ to confide to her the secret of the passion which consumes him. The account of the feast of Pan contains passages which in the quality of direct nature-interpretation are scarcely to be surpassed in poetry :

"Rain-scented eglantine

Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun;
The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run
To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass:
Man's voice was on the mountains; and the mass
Of nature's lives and wonders puls'd tenfold,
To feel this sun-rise and its glories old."

What can be more fresh and stirring? what happier in rhythmical movement? or what more characteristic of the true instinct by which Keats, in dealing with nature, avoided word-painting and palette work, leaving all merely visible beauties, the stationary world of colours and forms, as they should be left, to the painter, and dealing, as poetry alone is able to deal, with those delights which are felt and divined rather than seen, with the living activities and operant magic of the earth? Not less excellent is the realisation in the course of the same episode of the true spirit of ancient pastoral life and worship: the hymn to Pan, in especial, both expressing perfectly the meaning of the Greek myth to Greeks, and enriching it with touches of northern feeling that are foreign to, and yet most harmonious with, the original. Keats having got from Drayton, as I surmise, his first notion of an introductory feast

¹ Lempiere (after Pausanias) mentions Pæon as one of the fifty sons of Endymion (in the Elean version of the myth); and in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* there is a Pæana—the daughter of the giant Corflambo in the fourth book. Keats probably had both of these in mind when he gave Endymion a sister and called her Peona.

of Pan, in his hymn to that divinity borrowed recognizable touches alike from Chapman's Homer's hymn, from the sacrifice to Pan in Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*,¹ and from the hymns in Ben Jonson's masque, *Pan's Anniversary*; but borrowed as only genius can, fusing and re-fashioning whatever he took from other writers in the strong glow of an imagination fed from the living sources of nature:

"O Thou whose mighty palace roof doth hang
 From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
 Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
 Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;
 Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress
 Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken;
 And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken
 The dreary melody of bedded reeds—
 In desolate places where dank moisture breeds
 The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth;
 Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth
 Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,
 By thy love's milky brow!
 By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
 Hear us, great Pan!

O Harkener to the loud-clapping shears,
 While ever and anon to his shorn peers
 A ram goes bleating: Winder of the horn,
 When snouted wild-boars, routing tender corn,
 Anger our huntsman: Breather round our farms,
 To keep off mildews and all weather harms:
 Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds
 That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
 And wither drearily on barren moors:
 Dread opener of the mysterious doors

¹ Book 1, Song 4. The point about Browne has been made by Mr. W. T. Arnold.

Leading to universal knowledge—see,
 Great son of Dryope,
 The many that are come to pay their vows
 With leaves about their brows!"

In the subsequent discourse of Endymion and Peona he tells her the story of those celestial visitations which he scarce knows whether he has experienced or dreamed. In Keats's conception of his youthful heroes there is at all times a touch, not the wholesomest, of effeminacy and physical softness, and the influence of passion he is apt to make fever and unman them quite: as indeed a helpless and enslaved submission of all the faculties to love proved, when it came to the trial, to be a weakness of his own nature. He partly knew it, and could not help it: but the consequence is that the love-passages of *Endymion*, notwithstanding the halo of beautiful tremulous imagery that often plays about them, can scarcely be read with pleasure. On the other hand, in matters of subordinate feeling he shows not only a great rhetorical facility, but the signs often of lively dramatic power; as for instance in the remonstrance wherein Peona tries to make her brother ashamed of his weakness:

"Is this the cause?

This all? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas!
 That one who through this middle earth should pass
 Most like a sojourning demi-god, and leave
 His name upon the harp-string, should achieve
 No higher bard than simple maidenhood,
 Sighing alone, and fearfully—how the blood
 Left his young cheek; and how he used to stray
 He knew not where; and how he would say, *Nay*,
 If any said 'twas love: and yet 'twas love;
 What could it be but love? How a ring-dove

Let fall a sprig of yew-tree in his path ;
And how he died : and then, that love doth scathe
The gentle heart, as Northern blasts do roses.
And then the ballad of his sad life closes
With sighs, and an alas ! Endymion !”

In the second book the hero sets out in quest of his felicity, and is led by obscure signs and impulses through a mysterious and all but trackless region of adventure. In the first vague imaginings of youth, conceptions of natural and architectural marvels, unlocalized and half-realized in mysterious space, are apt to fill a large part, and to such imaginings Keats in this book lets himself go without a check. A Naiad in the disguise of a butterfly leads Endymion to her spring, and there reveals herself and bids him be of good hope ; an airy voice next invites him to descend “ Into the sparry hollows of the world ;” which done, he gropes his way to a subterranean temple of dim and most un-Grecian magnificence, where he is admitted to the presence of the sleeping Adonis, and whither Venus herself presently repairing gives him encouragement. Thence, urged by the haunting passion within him, he wanders on by dizzy paths and precipices, and forests of leaping, ever-changing fountains. Through all this phantasmagoria, engendered by a brain still teeming with the rich first fumes of boyish fancy, and in great part confusing and inappropriate, shine out at intervals strokes of the true old-world poetry, admirably felt and expressed—

“ He sinks adown a solitary glen,
Where there was never sound of mortal men,
Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet
To cheer itself to Delphi,”

or presences of old religion strongly conceived and realized :

"Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below,
Came mother Cybele—alone—alone—
In sombre chariot; dark foldings thrown
About her majesty, and front death-pale,
With turrets crowned."

After seeing the vision of Cybele, Endymion, still traveling through the bowels of the earth, is conveyed on an eagle's back down an unfathomable descent, and alighting, presently finds a "jasmine bower," whither his celestial mistress again stoops to visit him. Next he encounters the streams, and hears the voices of Arethusa and Alpheus on their fabled flight to Ortygia; as they disappear down a chasm, he utters a prayer to his goddess in their behalf, and then—

"He turn'd—there was a whelming sound—he slept,
There was a cooler light; and so he kept
Towards it by a sandy path, and lo!
More suddenly than doth a moment go,
The visions of the earth were gone and fled—
He saw the giant sea above his head."

Hitherto Endymion has been wholly absorbed in his own passion and adventures, but now the fates of others claim his sympathy: first, those of Alpheus and Arethusa, and next, throughout nearly the whole of the third book, those of Glaucus and Scylla. Keats handles this latter legend with great freedom, omitting its main point, the transformation of Scylla by Circe into a devouring monster, and making the enchantress punish her rival, not by this vile metamorphosis, but by death; or rather a trance resembling death, from which, after many ages, Glaucus is

enabled by Endymion's help to rescue her, and together with her the whole sorrowful fellowship of true lovers drowned at sea. From the point in the hero's submarine adventures where he first meets Glaucus,

“He saw far in the green concave of the sea
An old man sitting calm and peacefully.
Upon a weeded rock this old man sat,
And his white hair was awful, and a mat
Of weeds was cold beneath his cold thin feet”

—from this passage to the end of the book, in spite of redundancy and occasional ugly flaws, Keats brings home his version of the myth with strong and often exquisite effect to the imagination. No picture can well be more vivid than that of Circe pouring the magic phial upon her victims, and no speech much more telling than that with which the detected enchantress turns and scathes her unhappy lover. In the same book the description of the sunk treasures cumbering the ocean floor challenges comparison, not all unequally, with the famous similar passage in Shakspeare's *Richard III*. In the halls of Neptune Endymion again meets Venus, and receives from her more explicit encouragement than heretofore. Thence Nereids bear him earthward in a trance, during which he reads in spirit words of still more reassuring omen written in star-light on the dark. Since, in his adventure with Glaucus, he has allowed himself to be diverted from his own quest for the sake of relieving the sorrows of others, the hope which before seemed ever to elude him draws at last nearer to fulfilment.

It might seem fanciful to suppose that Keats had really in his mind a meaning such as this, but for the conviction he habitually declares that the pursuit of beauty as an aim

in life is only justified when it is accompanied by the idea of devotion to human service. And in his fourth book he leads his hero through a chain of adventures which seem certainly to have a moral and allegorical meaning, or none at all. Returning in that book to upper air, Endymion before long half forgets his goddess for the charms of an Indian maiden, the sound of whose lamentations reaches him while he is sacrificing in the forest, and who tells him how she has come wandering in the train of Bacchus from the east. This mysterious Indian maiden proves in fact to be no other than his goddess herself in disguise. But it is long before he discovers this, and in the meantime he is conducted by her side through a bewildering series of ærial ascents, descents, enchanted slumbers, and Olympian visions. All these, with his infidelity, which is no infidelity after all, his broodings in the Cave of Quietude, his illusions and awakenings, his final farewell to mortality and to Peona, and reunion with his celestial mistress in her own shape, make up a narrative inextricably confused, which only becomes partially intelligible when we take it as a parable of a soul's experience in pursuit of the ideal. Let a soul enamoured of the ideal—such would seem the argument—once suffer itself to forget its goal, and to quench for a time its longings in the real, nevertheless it will be still haunted by that lost vision; amidst all intoxications, disappointment and lassitude will still dog it, until it awakes at last to find that the reality which has thus allured it derives from the ideal its power to charm, that it is after all but a reflection from the ideal, a phantom of it. What chiefly or alone makes the episode poetically acceptable is the strain of lyric poetry which Keats has put into the mouth of the supposed Indian maiden when she tells her story. His later and more

famous lyrics, though they are free from the faults and immaturities which disfigure this, yet do not, to my mind at least, show a command over such various sources of imaginative and musical effect, or touch so thrillingly so many chords of the spirit. A mood of tender irony and wistful pathos like that of the best Elizabethan love-songs; a sense as keen as Heine's of the immemorial romance of India and the East; a power like that of Coleridge, and perhaps partly caught from him, of evoking the remotest weird and beautiful associations almost with a word; clear visions of Greek beauty and wild wood-notes of Celtic imagination—all these elements come here commingled, yet in a strain perfectly individual. Keats calls the piece a "roundelay, a form," which it only so far resembles that its opening measures are repeated at the close. It begins with a tender invocation to sorrow, and then with a first change of movement conjures up image of a deserted maidenhood beside Indian streams; till suddenly with another change comes the irruption of the Asian Bacchus on his march; next follows the detailed picture of the god and of his rout, suggested in part by the famous Titian at the National Gallery, and then, arranged as if for music, the challenge of the maiden to the Maenads and Satyrs, and their choral answers:

“ ‘ Whence came ye, merry Damsels ! Whence came ye !
So many, and so many, and such glee ?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
Your lutes, and gentler fate ?
‘ We follow Bacchus, Bacchus on the wing,
A conquering !
Bacchus, young Bacchus ! good or ill betide,
We dance before him through kingdoms wide :
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our wild minstrelsy !’ ”

' Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs ! Whence came ye !
 So many, and so many, and such glee ?
 Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
 Your nuts in oak-tree cleft ?"—
 ' For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree ;
 For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
 And cold mushrooms ;
 For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth ;
 Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth !—
 Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
 To our mad minstrelsy ! "

The strophes recounting the victorious journeys are very unequal ; and finally, returning to the opening motive, the lyric ends as it began, with an exquisite strain of lovelorn pathos :

 " Come then, sorrow !
 Sweetest sorrow !
 Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast :
 I thought to leave thee,
 And deceive thee,
 But now of all the world I love thee best.

 There is not one,
 No, no, not one
 But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid ;
 Thou art her mother
 And her brother,
 Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade."

The high-water mark of poetry in *Endymion* is thus reached in the two lyrics of the first and fourth book. Of these, at least, may be said with justice that which Jeffrey was inclined to say of the poem as a whole, that the degree to which any reader appreciates them will furnish as good a test as can be obtained of his having in him " a native relish for poetry, and a genuine sensibility to its intrinsic charm." In the main body of the work beauties

and faults are so bound up together that a critic may well be struck almost as much by one as by the other. Admirable truth and charm of imagination, exquisite freshness and felicity of touch, mark such brief passages as we have quoted above; the very soul of poetry breathes in them and in a hundred others throughout the work; but read farther, and you will in almost every case be brought up by hardly tolerable blemishes of execution and of taste. Thus in the tale told by Glaucus we find a line of strong poetic vision, such as

“Ææa’s isle was wondering at the moon,”

standing alone in a passage of rambling and ineffective over-honeyed narrative; or again, a couplet forced and vulgar like this, both in rhyme and expression:

“I look’d—’twas Scylla! Cursed, cursed Circe!
O vulture-witch, hast never heard of mercy?”

is followed three lines farther on by a masterly touch of imagination and the heart:

“Cold, O cold indeed
Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed
The sea-swell took her hair.”

One, indeed, of the besetting faults of his earlier poetry Keats has shaken off—his muse is seldom tempted now to echo the familiar sentimental chirp of Hunt’s. But that tendency which he by nature shared with Hunt, the tendency to linger and luxuriate over every imagined pleasure with an over-fond and doting relish, is still strong in him. And to the weaknesses native to his own youth and temperament are joined others derived from an exclusive devotion to the earlier masters of English poetry. The creative impulse of the Elizabethan age, in its waywardness

and lack of discipline and discrimination, not less than in its luxuriant strength and freshness, seems actually revived in him. He outdoes even Spenser in his proneness to let Invention ramble and loiter uncontrolled through what wildernesses she will, with Imagination at her heels to dress if possible in living beauty the wonders that she finds there; and sometimes Imagination is equal to the task and sometimes not: and even busy Invention herself occasionally flags, and is content to grasp at any idle clue the rhyme holds out to her:

"—a nymph of Dian's
Wearing a coronal of tender scions"—

"Does yonder thrush,
Schooling its half-fledged little ones to brush
About the dewy forest, whisper tales?—
Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails
Will slime the rose to-night."

Chapman especially, among Keats's masters, had this trick of letting thought follow the chance dictation of rhyme. Spenser and Chapman—to say nothing of Chatterton—had farther accustomed his ear to experimental and rash dealings with their mother-tongue. English was almost as unsettled a language for him as for them, and he strives to extend its resources, and make them adequate to the range and freshness of his imagery, by the use of compound and other adjectival coinages in Chapman's spirit—"far-spooming Ocean," "eye-earnestly," "dead-drifting," "their surly eyes brow-hidden," "nervy knees," "surgy murmurs"—coinages sometimes legitimate or even happy, but often fantastic and tasteless, as well as by sprinkling his nineteenth-century diction with such archaisms as "shent," "sith," and "seemlihed" from Spenser, "eterne" from Spenser and William Browne; or with arbitrary verbal

forms, as "to folly," "to monitor," "gordian'd up," to "fragment up;" or with neuter verbs used as active, as to "travel" an eye, to "pace" a team of horses, and *vice versa*. Hence even when in the other qualities of poetry his work is good, in diction and expression it is apt to be lax and wavering, and full of oddities and discords.

In rhythm Keats adheres in *Endymion* to the method he had adopted in *Sleep and Poetry*, deliberately keeping the sentence independent of the metre, putting full pauses anywhere in his lines rather than at the end, and avoiding any regular beat upon the rhyme. Leigh Hunt thought Keats had carried this method too far, even to the negation of metre. Some later critics have supposed the rhythm of *Endymion* to have been influenced by the *Pharonnida* of Chamberlayne: a fourth-rate poet, remarkable chiefly for two things—for the inextricable trailing involution of his sentences, exceeding that of the very worst prose of his time, and for a perverse persistency in ending his heroic lines with the lightest syllables—prepositions, adverbs, and conjunctions—on which neither pause nor emphasis is possible.¹

But Keats, even where his verse runs most diffusely,

¹ The following is a fair and characteristic enough specimen of Chamberlayne:

"Upon the throne, in such a glorious state
As earth's adored favourites, there sat
The image of a monarch, vested in
The spoils of nature's robes, whose price had been
A diadem's redemption; his large size,
Beyond this pigmy age, did equalize
The admired proportions of those mighty men
Whose cast-up bones, grown modern wonders, when
Found out, are carefully preserved to tell
Posterity how much these times are fell
From nature's youthful strength."

rarely fails in delicacy of musical and metrical ear, or in variety and elasticity of sentence structure. There is nothing in his treatment of the measure for which precedent may not be found in the work of almost every poet who employed it during the half-century that followed its brilliant revival for the purposes of narrative poetry by Marlowe. At most, he can only be said to make a rule of that which with the older poets was rather an exception; and to seek affinities for him among the tedious by-ways of provincial seventeenth-century verse seems quite superfluous.

As the best criticism on Keats's *Endymion* is in his own preface, so its best defence is in a letter he wrote six months after it was printed. "It is as good," he says, "as I had power to make it by myself." Hunt had warned him against the risks of a long poem, and Shelley against those of hasty publication. From much in his performance that was exuberant and crude the classical training and now ripening taste of Shelley might doubtless have saved him, had he been willing to listen. But he was determined that his poetry should at all times be the true spontaneous expression of his mind. "Had I been nervous," he goes on, "about its being a perfect piece, and with that view asked advice, and trembled over every page, it would not have been written; for it is not in my nature to fumble. I will write independently. I have written independently *without judgment*. I may write independently and *with judgment* hereafter. The genius of poetry must work out its own salvation in a man. It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself." How well Keats was able to turn the fruits of experience to the benefit of his art, how swift the genius of poetry in him was to work out, as he says, its own salvation, we shall see when we come to consider his next labours.

CHAPTER VI.

Northern Tour.—The *Blackwood* and *Quarterly Reviews*.—Death of Tom Keats.—Removal to Wentworth Place.—Fanny Brawne.—Excursion to Chichester.—Absorption in Love and Poetry.—Haydon and Money Difficulties.—Family Correspondence.—Darkening Prospects.—Summer at Shanklin and Winchester.—Wise Resolutions.—Return from Winchester. [June, 1818—October, 1819.]

WHILE Keats, in the spring of 1818, was still at Teignmouth, with *Endymion* on the eve of publication, he had been wavering between two different plans for the immediate future. One was to go for a summer's walking tour through Scotland with Charles Brown. "I have many reasons," he writes to Reynolds, "for going wonder-ways: to make my winter chair free from spleen; to enlarge my vision; to escape disquisitions on poetry, and Kingston-criticism; to promote digestion and economize shoe-leather. I'll have leather buttons and belt, and if Brown hold his mind, 'over the hills we go.' If my books will keep me to it, then will I take all Europe in turn, and see the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them." A fortnight later we find him inclining to give up this purpose under an over-mastering sense of the inadequacy of his own attainments, and of the necessity of acquiring knowledge, and ever more knowledge, to sustain the flight of poetry:

"I was proposing to travel over the North this summer. There is but one thing to prevent me. I know nothing—I have read nothing

—and I mean to follow Solomon's directions, 'Get learning—get understanding.' I find earlier days are gone by—I find that I can have no enjoyment in the world but continual drinking of knowledge. I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good to the world. Some do it with their society; some with their wit; some with their benevolence; some with a sort of power of conferring pleasure and good-humour on all they meet—and in a thousand ways, all dutiful to the command of great nature. There is but one way for me. The road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it; and for that end, purpose retiring for some years. I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious and a love for philosophy: were I calculated for the former I should be glad; but as I am not, I shall turn all my soul to the latter."

After he had come back to Hampstead in May, however, Keats allowed himself to be persuaded, no doubt partly by considerations of health, and the recollection of his failure to stand the strain of solitary thought a year before, to resume his original intention. It was agreed between him and Brown that they should accompany George Keats and his bride as far as Liverpool, and then start on foot from Lancaster. They left London accordingly on Monday, June 22d.¹ The coach stopped for dinner the first day at Redbourn, near St. Albans, where Keats's friend of medical-student days, Mr. Stephens, was in practice. He came to shake hands with the travelling party at the poet's request, and many years afterwards wrote an account of the interview, the chief point of which is a description of Mrs. George Keats. "Rather short, not what might be strictly called handsome, but looked like a being whom any man of moderate sensibility might easily love. She had the imaginative-poetical cast. Somewhat singular and girlish in her attire. . . . There was something original about her, and John seemed to regard her as a be-

¹ See Appendix, p. 223.

ing whom he delighted to honour, and introduced her with evident satisfaction.”¹ With no other woman or girl friend was Keats ever on such easy and cordial terms of intimacy as with this “Nymph of the downward smile and side-long glance” of his early sonnet — “Sister George,” as she had now become; and for that reason, and on account of the series of charming playful affectionate letters he wrote to her afterwards in America, the portrait above quoted, such as it is, seems worth preserving.

The farewells at Liverpool over, Keats and Brown went on by coach to Lancaster, and thence began their walk, Keats taking for his reading one book only, the little three-volume edition of Cary’s *Dante*. “I cannot,” writes Brown, “forget the joy, the rapture of my friend when he suddenly, and for the first time, became sensible to the full effect of mountain scenery. It was just before our descent to the village of Bowness, at a turn of the road, when the lake of Windermere at once came into view. . . . All was enchantment to us both.” Keats in his own letters says comparatively little about the scenery, and that quite simply and quietly, not at all with the descriptive enthusiasm of the modern picturesque tourist; nor indeed with so much of that quality as the sedate and fastidious Gray had shown in his itineraries fifty years before. The truth is that an intensely active, intuitive genius for nature like his needs not for its exercise the stimulus of the continued presence of beauty, but on a minimum of experience can summon up and multiply for itself spirit sunsets, and glories of dream and lake and mountain, richer and more varied than the mere receptive lover of scenery, eager to enjoy but impotent to create, can witness in a life-time of travel and pursuit. Moreover, whatever the effect on him

¹ Houghton MSS.

of that first burst of Windermere, it is evident that as Keats proceeded northwards he found the scenery somewhat foreign to his taste. Besides the familiar home beauties of England, two ideals of landscape, classic and mediæval, haunted and allured his imagination almost equally: that of the sunny and fabled south, and that of the shadowed and adventurous north; and the Scottish border, with its bleak and moorish, rain-swept and cloud-empurpled hills, and its unhomely cold stone villages, struck him at first as answering to neither. "I know not how it is, the clouds, the sky, the houses, all seem anti-Grecian and anti-Charlemagnish."

A change, besides, was coming over Keats's thoughts and feelings whereby scenery altogether was beginning to interest him less, and his fellow-creatures more. In the acuteness of childish and boyish sensation, among the suburban fields or on sea-side holidays, he had unconsciously absorbed images of nature enough for his faculties to work on through a life-time of poetry; and now, in his second chamber of Maiden-thought, the appeal of nature yields in his mind to that of humanity. "Scenery is fine," he had already written from Devonshire in the spring, "but human nature is finer." In the Lake country, after climbing Skiddaw one morning early, and walking to Treby the same afternoon, where they watched with amusement the exercises in a country dancing-school: "There was as fine a row of boys and girls," says Keats, "as you ever saw; some beautiful faces, and one exquisite mouth. I never felt so near the glory of patriotism, the glory of making, by any means, a country happier. This is what I like better than scenery." The same note recurs frequently in letters of a later date.

From Lancaster the travellers walked first to Ambleside;

from Ambleside to the foot of Helvellyn, where they slept, having called by the way on Wordsworth at Rydal, and been disappointed to find him away electioneering. From Helvellyn to Keswick, whence they made the circuit of Derwentwater; Keswick to Treby, Treby to Wigton, and Wigton to Carlisle, where they arrived on the 1st of July. Thence by coach to Dumfries, visiting at the latter place the tomb and house of Burns, to whose memory Keats wrote a sonnet, by no means in his best vein. From Dumfries they started south-westwards for Galloway, a region little frequented even now, and then hardly at all, by tourists. Reaching the Kirkcudbrightshire coast, with its scenery at once wild and soft, its embosomed inlets and rocky tufted headlands, its views over the glimmering Solway to the hazy hills of Man, Brown bethought him that this was Guy Mannering's country, and began to tell Keats about Meg Merrilies. Keats, who, according to the fashion of his circle, was no enthusiast for Scott's poetry and of the Waverley novels, had read the *Antiquary* but not *Guy Mannering*, was much struck; and presently, writes Brown, "there was a little spot, close to our pathway. 'There,' he said, 'in that very spot, without a shadow of doubt, has old Meg Merrilies often boiled her kettle.' It was among pieces of rock and brambles and broom, ornamented with a profusion of honeysuckles and roses and foxgloves, and all in the very blush and fulness of blossom." As they went along, Keats composed on Scott's theme the spirited ballad beginning "Old Meg, she was a gypsy," and stopping to breakfast at Auchencairn, copied it out in a letter which he was writing to his young sister at odd moments, and again in another letter which he began at the same place to Tom. It was his way on his tour, and indeed always, thus to keep by him the letters he was writing, and

add scraps to them as the fancy took him. The systematic Brown, on the other hand, wrote regularly and uniformly in the evenings. "He affronts my indolence and luxury," says Keats, "by pulling out of his knapsack, first his paper, secondly his pens, and last his ink. Now I would not care if he would change a little. I say now, why not take out his pens first sometimes? But I might as well tell a hen to hold up her head before she drinks, instead of afterwards."

From Kirkcudbright they walked, on July 5th—skirting the wild moors about the Water of Fleet, and passing where Cairnsmore looks down over wooded slopes to the steaming estuary of the Cree—as far as Newton Stewart; thence across the Wigtonshire levels by Glenluce to Stranraer and Portpatrick. Here they took the Donaghadee packet for Ireland, with the intention of seeing the Giant's Causeway, but finding the distances and expense exceed their calculation, contented themselves with a walk to Belfast, and crossed again to Portpatrick on the third day. In letters written during and immediately after this excursion, Keats has some striking passages of human observation and reflection:

"These Kirk-men have done Scotland good. They have made men, women, old men, young men, old women, young women, hags, girls, and infants, all careful; so they are formed into regular phalanges of savers and gainers. . . . These Kirk-men have done Scotland harm; they have banished puns, love, and laughing. To remind you of the fate of Burns — poor, unfortunate fellow! his disposition was Southern! How sad it is when a luxurious imagination is obliged, in self-defence, to deaden its delicacy in vulgarity and in things attainable, that it may not have leisure to go mad after things that are not! . . . I would sooner be a wild deer than a girl under the dominion of the Kirk; and I would sooner be a wild hog than be the occasion of a poor creature's penance before those execrable elders."

"On our return from Belfast we met a sedan—the Duchess of Dunghill. It was no laughing matter though. Imagine the worst dog-kennel you ever saw, placed upon two poles from a mouldy fencing. In such a wretched thing sat a squalid old woman, squat like an ape half-starved from a scarcity of biscuit in its passage from Madagascar to the Cape, with a pipe in her mouth, and looking out with a round-eyed, skinny-lidded inanity, with a sort of horizontal idiotic movement of her head: squat and lean she sat, and puffed out the smoke, while two ragged, tattered girls carried her along. What a thing would be a history of her life and sensations!"

From Stranraer the friends made straight for Burns's country, walking along the coast by Ballantrae, Girvan, Kirkoswald, and Maybole, to Ayr, with the lonely mass of Ailsa Crag, and presently the mountains of Arran, looming ever above the Atlantic floor on the left; and here again we find Keats taking a keen pleasure in the mingled richness and wildness of the coast scenery. They went to Kirk Alloway, and he was delighted to find the home of Burns amid scenes so fair. He had made up his mind to write a sonnet in the cottage of that poet's birth, and did so, but was worried by the prate of the man in charge—"a mahogany-faced old jackass who knew Burns: he ought to have been kicked for having spoken to him"—"his gab hindered my sublimity: the flat dog made me write a flat sonnet." And again, as they journeyed on towards Glasgow he composed with considerable pains (as Brown particularly mentions) the lines beginning 'There is a charm in footing slow across a silent plain.' They were meant to express the temper in which his pilgrimage through the Burns country had been made, but in spite of an occasional striking breadth and concentration of imagery, are on the whole forced and unlike himself.

From Ayr Keats and Brown tramped on to Glasgow, and from Glasgow by Dumbarton through the *Lady of the*

Lake country, which they found vexatiously full of tourists, to Inverary, and thence by Loch Awe to Oban. At Inverary Keats was amused and exasperated by a performance of *The Stranger* to an accompaniment of bagpipe music. Bathing in Loch Fyne the next morning, he got horribly bitten by gadflies, and vented his smart in a set of doggerel rhymes. The walk along the shores of Loch Awe impressed him greatly, and for once he writes of it something like a set description, for the benefit of his brother Tom. At the same point occur for the first time complaints, slight at first, of fatigue and discomfort. At the beginning of his tour Keats had written to his sister of its effects upon his sleep and appetite; telling her how he tumbled into bed "so fatigued that when I am asleep you might sew my nose to my great toe and trundle me round the town, like a hoop, without waking me. Then I get so hungry a ham goes but a very little way, and fowls are like larks to me. . . . I can eat a bull's head as easily as I used to do bull's eyes." Presently he writes that he is getting used to it, and doing his twenty miles or more a day without inconvenience. But now in the remoter parts of the Highlands the coarse fare and accommodation, and rough journeys and frequent drenchings, begin to tell upon both him and Brown, and he grumbles at the perpetual diet of oatcake and eggs. Arrived at Oban, the friends undertook one journey in especial which proved too much for Keats's strength. Finding the regular tourist route by water to Staffa and Iona too expensive, they were persuaded to take the ferry to the hither side of the island of Mull, and then with a guide cross on foot to the farther side opposite Iona: a wretched walk, as Keats calls it, of some thirty-seven miles, over difficult ground and in the very roughest weather. By good luck the sky lifted at

the critical moment, and the travellers had a favourable view of Staffa. By the power of the past and its associations in the one "illustrious island," and of nature's architecture in the other, Keats shows himself naturally much impressed. Fingal's Cave in especial touched his imagination, and on it and its profanation by the race of tourists he wrote, in the seven-syllable metre which no writer since Ben Jonson has handled better or more vigorously, the lines beginning "Not Aladdin Magian." Avoiding mere epithet-work and description, like the true poet he is, he begins by calling up for comparison the visions of other fanes or palaces of enchantment, and then, bethinking himself of Milton's cry to Lycidas

"—where'er thy bones are hurl'd,
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides"—

imagines that lost one to have been found by the divinity of Ocean, and put by him in charge of this cathedral of his building. In his priestly character Lycidas tells his latter-day visitant of the religion of the place, complains of the violation of its solitude, and ends with a fine abruptness which is the most effective stroke of art in the piece:

"So for ever I will leave
Such a taint, and soon unweave
All the magic of the place!¹
.
.
.
So saying, with a spirit's glance
He dived."

From the exertion and exposure which he underwent on his Scotch tour, and especially in this Mull expedition, are to be traced the first distinct and settled symptoms of failure in Keats's health, and of the development of his hered-

¹ See Appendix, p. 223.

itary tendency to consumption. In the same letter to his brother Tom which contains the transcript of the Fingal poem, he speaks of a "slight sore throat," and of being obliged to rest for a day or two at Oban. Thence they pushed on in bad weather to Fort William, made the ascent of Ben Nevis in a dissolving mist, and so by the 6th of August to Inverness. Keats's throat had in the mean time been getting worse; the ascent, and especially the descent, of Ben Nevis had, as he confesses, tried him: feverish symptoms set in, and the doctor whom he consulted at Inverness thought his condition threatening, and forbade him to continue his tour. Accordingly he took passage on the 8th or 9th of August from the port of Cromarty for London, leaving his companion to pursue his journey alone—"much lamenting," to quote Brown's own words, "the loss of his beloved intelligence at my side." Keats in some degree picked up strength during a nine days' sea passage, the humours of which he afterwards described pleasantly in a letter to his brother George. But his throat trouble, the premonitory sign of worse, never really or for any length of time left him afterwards. On the 18th of August he arrived at Hampstead, and made his appearance among his friends the next day, "as brown and as shabby as you can imagine," writes Mrs. Dilke; "scarcely any shoes left, his jacket all torn at the back, a fur cap, a great plaid, and his knapsack. I cannot tell what he looked like." When he found himself seated, for the first time after his hardships, in a comfortable stuffed chair, we are told how he expressed a comic enjoyment of the sensation, quoting at himself the words in which Quince the carpenter congratulates his gossip the weaver on his metamorphosis.¹

¹ Severn in Houghton MSS.

Simultaneously almost with Keats's return from the North appeared attacks on him in *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*. The *Blackwood* article, being No. IV. of a series bearing the signature "Z" on the "Cockney School of Poetry," was printed in the August number of the magazine. The previous articles of the same series, as well as a letter similarly signed, had been directed against Leigh Hunt, in a strain of insult so preposterous as to be obviously inspired by the mere wantonness of partisan licepce. It is not quite certain who wrote them, but there is every reason to believe that they were the work of Wilson, suggested and perhaps revised by the publisher, William Blackwood, at this time his own sole editor. Not content with attacking Hunt's opinions, or his real weaknesses as a writer or a man, his Edinburgh critics must needs heap on him the grossest accusations of vice and infamy. In the course of these articles allusion had several times been made to "Johnny Keats" as an "amiable bardling" and puling satellite of the arch-offender and king of Cockaigne, Hunt. When now Keats's own turn came his treatment was mild in comparison with that of his supposed leader. The strictures on his work are idle and offensive, but not more so than is natural to unsympathetic persons full of prejudice and wishing to hurt. "Cockney" had been in itself a fair enough label for a hostile critic to fasten upon Hunt; neither was it altogether inapplicable to Keats, having regard to the facts of his origin and training—that is, if we choose to forget that the measure of a man is not his experience, but the use he is able to make of it. The worst part of the Keats review was in its personalities—"so back to the shop, Mr. John, stick to 'plasters, pills, ointment boxes,' etc."—and what made these worse was the manner in which the ma-

terials for them had been obtained. Keats's friend Bailey had by this time taken his degree, and after publishing a friendly notice of *Endymion* in the *Oxford Herald* for June, had left the University and gone to settle in a curacy in Cumberland. In the course of the summer he staid at Stirling, at the house of Bishop Gleig, whose son, afterwards the well-known writer and Chaplain-general to the forces, was his friend, and whose daughter (a previous love-affair with one of the Reynold sisters having fallen through) he soon afterwards married. Here Bailey met Lockhart, then in the hey-day of his brilliant and bitter youth, lately admitted to the intimacy of Scott, and earning on the staff of *Blackwood* and otherwise the reputation and the nickname of "Scorpion." Bailey, anxious to save Keats from the sort of treatment to which Hunt had already been exposed, took the opportunity of telling Lockhart in a friendly way his circumstances and history, explaining at the same time that his attachment to Leigh Hunt was personal and not political, pleading that he should not be made an object of party denunciation, and ending with the request that, at any rate, what had been thus said in confidence should not be used to his disadvantage. To which Lockhart replied that certainly it should not be so used by *him*. Within three weeks the article appeared, making use, to all appearance, and to Bailey's great indignation, of the very facts he had thus confidentially communicated.

To the end of his life Bailey remained convinced that whether or not Lockhart himself wrote the piece, he must, at any rate, have prompted and supplied the materials for it.¹ It seems, in fact, all but certain that he actually wrote

¹ Houghton MSS.

it.¹ If so, it was a felon stroke on Lockhart's part, and to forgive him we must needs remember all the gratitude that is his due for his filial allegiance to, and his immortal biography of, Scott. But even in that connection our grudge against him revives again, since, in the party violence of the time and place, Scott himself was drawn into encouraging the savage polemics of his young Edinburgh friends, and that he was in some measure privy to the Cockney School outrages seems certain. Such, at least, was the impression prevailing at the time;² and when Severn, who did not know it, years afterwards innocently approached the subject of Keats and his detractors in conversation with Scott at Rome, he observed both in Scott and his daughter signs of pain and confusion which he could only interpret in the same sense.³ It is hard to say whether the thought of the great-hearted Scott, the soul most free from jealousy or harshness, thus associated with an act of stupid cruelty to genius, is one to make us the more indignant against those who so misled him, or the more patient of mistakes committed by commoner spirits among the distracting cries and blind collisions of the world.

The *Quarterly* article on *Endymion* followed in the last week of September (in the number dated April), and was in an equally contemptuous strain, the writer pro-

¹ Dilke (in a MS. note to his copy of Lord Houghton's *Life and Letters*, ed. 1848) states positively that Lockhart afterwards owned as much; and there are tricks of style—*e.g.*, the use of the Spanish *Sangrado* for doctor—which seem distinctly to betray his hand.

² Leigh Hunt at first believed that Scott himself was the writer, and Haydon to the last fancied it was Scott's faithful satellite, the actor Terry.

³ Severn in the *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 401.

fessing to have been unable to read beyond the first canto, or to make head or tail of that. In this case again the question of authorship must remain uncertain; but Gifford as editor, and an editor who never shrank from cutting a contributor's work to his own pattern, must bear the responsibility with posterity. The review is quite in his manner, that of a man insensible to the higher charm of poetry, incapable of judging it except by mechanical rule and precedent, and careless of the pain he gives. Considering the perfect modesty and good judgment with which Keats had, in his preface, pointed out the weaknesses of his own work, the attacks are both alike inexcusable. They had the effect of promptly rousing the poet's friends in his defence. Reynolds published a warm rejoinder to the *Quarterly* reviewer in a West-country paper, the *Alfred*; an indignant letter on the same side appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* with the initials J. S.—those probably of John Scott, then editor of the *London Magazine*, and soon afterwards killed by a friend of Lockhart's in a duel arising out of these very *Blackwood* brawls, in which it was thought that Lockhart himself ought to have come forward. Leigh Hunt reprinted Reynolds's letter, with some introductory words, in the *Examiner*, and later in his life regretted that he had not done more. But he could not have done more to any purpose. He was not himself an enthusiastic admirer of *Endymion*, and had plainly said so to Keats and to his friends. Reynolds's piece, which he reprinted, was quite effective and to the point; and, moreover, any formal defence of Keats by Hunt would only have increased the virulence of his enemies, as they both perfectly well knew; folly and spite being always ready to cry out that praise of a friend by a friend must needs be interested or blind.

Neither was Keats's demeanour under the lash such as could make his friends suppose him particularly hurt. Proud in the extreme, he had no irritable vanity; and aiming in his art, if not always steadily, yet always at the highest, he rather despised than courted such success as he saw some of his contemporaries enjoy. "I hate," he says, "a mawkish popularity." Even in the hopes of permanent fame which he avowedly cherished, there was nothing intemperate or impatient, and he was conscious of perceiving his own shortcomings at least as clearly as his critics. Accordingly he took his treatment at their hands more coolly than older and less sensitive men had taken the like. Hunt had replied indignantly to his *Blackwood* traducers, repelling scorn with scorn. Hazlitt endeavoured to have the law of them. Keats at the first sting declared, indeed, that he would write no more poetry, but try to do what good he could to the world in some other way. Then quickly recovering himself, he with great dignity and simplicity treated the annoyance as one merely temporary, indifferent, and external. When Mr. Hessey sent for his encouragement the extracts from the papers in which he had been defended, he wrote:

"I cannot but feel indebted to those gentlemen who have taken my part. As for the rest, I begin to get a little acquainted with my own strength and weakness. Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict; and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary re-perception and ratification of what is fine."

And again: "There have been two letters in my defence in the *Chronicle* and one in the *Examiner* copied from the Exeter paper, and written by Reynolds. I don't know who wrote those in the *Chron-*

icle. This is a mere matter of the moment: I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death. Even as a matter of present interest, the attempt to crush me in the *Quarterly* has only brought me more into notice, and it is a common expression among bookmen, 'I wonder the *Quarterly* should cut its own throat.'

In point of fact an unknown admirer from the West Country sent Keats about this time a letter and sonnet of sympathy, with which was enclosed a further tribute in the shape of a £25 note. Keats was both pleased and displeased. "If I had refused it," he says, "I should have behaved in a very braggadocio, dunderheaded manner, and yet the present galls me a little." About the same time he received, through his friend Richard Woodhouse, a young barrister who acted in some sort as literary adviser or assistant to Messrs. Taylor & Hessey,¹ a glowing letter of sympathy and encouragement from Miss Porter, "of Romance celebrity," by which he shows himself in his reply not more flattered than politeness demands.

Keats was really living, during the stress of these *Blackwood* and *Quarterly* storms, under the pressure of another and far more heartfelt trouble. His Hampstead friends, before they heard of his intended return from Scotland, had felt reluctantly bound to write and summon him home on account of the alarming condition of his brother Tom. He had left the invalid behind in their lodgings at Well Walk, and found that he had grown rapidly worse during his absence. In fact the case was desperate, and for the next few months Keats's chief occupation was the harrowing one of watching and ministering to this dying brother. In a letter written in the third week of September he speaks thus of his feelings and occupations: "I wish I could say Tom was better. His identity presses upon me

¹ See Preface, p. vii.

so all day that I am obliged to go out; and although I had intended to have given some time to study alone, I am obliged to write and plunge into abstract images to ease myself of his countenance, his voice, and feebleness, so that I live now in a continual fever. It must be poisonous to life, although I feel well. Imagine 'the hateful siege of contraries;' if I think of fame, of poetry, it seems a crime to me, and yet I must do so or suffer." And again, about the same time, to Reynolds: "I never was in love, yet the voice and shape of a woman have haunted me these two days—at such a time, when the relief, the feverous relief of poetry, seems a much less crime. This morning poetry has conquered; I have relapsed into those abstractions which are my only life; I feel escaped from a new, strange, and threatening sorrow, and I am thankful for it. There is an awful warmth about my heart, like a load of immortality." As the autumn wore on, the task of the watcher grew ever more sorrowful and absorbing.¹ On the 29th of October Keats wrote to his brother and sister-in-law in America, warning them, in language of a beautiful tender moderation and sincerity, to be prepared for the worst. For the next month his time was almost wholly taken up by the sick-bed, and in the first week of December the end came. "Early one morning," writes Brown, "I was awakened in my bed by a pressure on my hand. It was Keats, who came to tell me that his brother was no more. I said nothing, and we both remained silent for a while, my hand fast locked in his. At length, my thoughts returning from the dead to the living, I said, 'Have nothing more to do with those lodgings—and alone, too! Had you not better live with me?' He paused, pressed my hand warmly, and replied, 'I think

¹ See Appendix, p. 224.

it would be better.' From that moment he was my intimate."¹

Brown, as has been said already, had built and lived in one part—the smaller eastern part—of the block of two semi-detached houses near the bottom of John Street, Hampstead, to which Dilke, who built and occupied the other part, had given the name of Wentworth Place.² The accommodation in Brown's quarters included a front and back sitting-room on the ground floor, with a front and back bedroom over them. The arrangement with Keats was that he should share household expenses, occupying the front sitting-room for the sake of quiet at his work. As soon, relates Brown, as the consolations of nature and friendship had in some measure alleviated his grief, Keats became gradually once more absorbed in poetry, his special task being *Hyperion*, at which he had already begun to work before his brother died. But not wholly absorbed, for there was beginning to wind itself about his heart a new spell more powerful than that of poetry itself. It was at this time that the flame caught him which he had always presciently sought to avoid "lest it should burn him up." With his quick self-knowledge he had early realised, not to his satisfaction, his own peculiar mode of feeling towards womankind. Chivalrously and tremulously devoted to his mind's ideal of the sex, he found himself only too critical of the real women that he met, and too ready to perceive or suspect faults in them. Conscious, at the same time, of the fire of sense and blood within him, he

¹ Houghton MSS.

² The house is now known as Lawn Bank, the two blocks having been thrown into one, with certain alterations and additions which in the summer of 1885 were pointed out to me in detail by Mr. William Dilke, the then surviving brother of Keats's friend.

had thought himself partly fortunate in being saved from the entanglements of passion by his sense of this difference between the reality and his ideal. The set of three sonnets in his first volume, beginning, "Woman, when I beheld thee flippant, vain," had given expression half gracefully, half awkwardly, to this state of mind. Its persistency is affirmed often in his letters.

"I am certain," he wrote to Bailey from Scotland, "I have not a right feeling towards women—at this moment I am striving to be just to them, but I cannot. Is it because they fall so far beneath my boyish imagination? When I was a schoolboy I thought a fair woman a pure goddess; my mind was a soft nest in which some one of them slept, though she knew it not. I have no right to expect more than their reality. I thought them ethereal, above men. I find them perhaps equal—great by comparison is very small. . . . Is it not extraordinary?—when among men I have no evil thoughts, no malice, no spleen; I feel free to speak or to be silent; I can listen, and from every one I can learn; my hands are in my pockets, I am free from all suspicion, and comfortable. When I am among women I have evil thoughts, malice, spleen; I cannot speak, or be silent; I am full of suspicions, and therefore listen to nothing; I am in a hurry to be gone. . . . I must absolutely get over this—but how?"

In a fine passage of a letter to his relatives in America he alleges this general opinion of women, and with it his absorption in the life, or rather the hundred lives, of imagination, as reasons for hoping that he will never marry:

"The roaring of the wind is my wife, and the stars through my window-panes are my children; the mighty abstract idea of Beauty in all things I have stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness. An amiable wife and sweet children I contemplate as part of that Beauty, but I must have a thousand of those beautiful particles to fill up my heart. I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone, but

in a thousand worlds. No sooner am I alone than shapes of epic greatness are stationed around me, and serve my spirit the office which is equivalent to a King's Body-guard: 'then Tragedy with scepter'd pall comes sweeping by.' According to my state of mind I am with Achilles shouting in the trenches, or with Theocritus in the vales of Sicily; or throw my whole being into Troilus, and, repeating those lines, 'I wander like a lost soul upon the Stygian bank, staying for waftage,' I melt into the air with a voluptuousness so delicate that I am content to be alone. These things, combined with the opinion I have formed of the generality of women, who appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a sugar-plum than my time, form a barrier against matrimony that I rejoice in."

But now Keats's hour was come. Since his return from Scotland, in the midst of his watching by his brother's sick-bed, we have seen him confessing himself haunted already by the shape of a woman. This was a certain Miss Charlotte Cox, a West-Indian cousin of Reynolds's, to whom he did not think the Reynolds sisters were quite kind. A few days later he writes again how he has been attracted by her rich Eastern look and grace. Very soon, however, the attraction passed, and this "Charmian" left him fancy-free, but only to find his fate elsewhere. A Mrs. Brawne, a widow lady of some little property, with a daughter just grown up and two younger children, had taken Brown's house for the summer while he was away in Scotland. Here the Brawnes had naturally become acquainted with the Dilkes, living next door; the acquaintance was kept up when they moved from Brown's house to one in Downshire Street close by; and it was at the Dilkes' that Keats met Miss Fanny Brawne after his return. Her ways and presence at first irritated and after a little while completely fascinated him. From his first sarcastic account of her written to his brother, as well as from Severn's mention of her likeness to the draped figure

in Titian's picture of Sacred and Profane Love, and from the full-length silhouette of her that has been preserved, it is not difficult to realise her aspect and presence. A brisk and blooming very young beauty, of the far from uncommon English hawk blonde type, with aquiline nose and retreating forehead, sharp-cut nostril and gray-blue eye, a slight, shapely figure rather short than tall, a taking smile, and good hair, carriage and complexion—such was Fanny Brawne externally, but of her character we have little means of judging. She was certainly high-spirited, inexperienced, and self-confident; as certainly, though kind and constant to her lover, in spite of prospects that before long grew dark, she did not fully realise what manner of man he was. Both his men and women friends, without thinking unkindly of her, were apparently of one opinion in holding her no mate for him either in heart or mind, and in regarding the attachment as unlucky.

So it assuredly was; so, probably, under the circumstances, must any passion for a woman have been. Stroke on stroke of untoward fortune had in truth begun to fall on Keats, as if in fulfilment of the constitutional misgivings of his darker moods. First the departure of his brother George had deprived him of his chief friend, to whom almost alone he had from boyhood been accustomed to turn for relief in hours of despondency. Next the exertions of his Scotch tour had over-taxed his strength, and unchained, though as yet he knew it not, the deadly hereditary enemy in his blood. Coming back, he had found the grasp of that enemy closed inexorably upon his brother Tom, and in nursing him had lived in spirit through all his pains. At the same time the gibes of the reviewers, little as they might touch his inner self, came to teach him the harshness and carelessness of the world's judgments, and

the precariousness of his practical hopes from literature. Last were added the pangs of love—love requited, indeed, but having no near or sure prospect of fruition; and even love disdained might have made him suffer less. The passion wrought fiercely in his already fevered blood; its alternations of doubt and torment and tantalising rapture sapped his powers, and redoubled every strain to which bereavement, shaken health, and anticipations of poverty, exposed them. Within a year the combined assault proved too much for his strength, and he broke down. But in the meantime he showed a brave face to the world, and while anxiety gnawed and passion wasted him, was able to throw himself into the labours of his art with a fruitful, if a fitful, energy. During the first few weeks of winter following his brother's death he wrote, indeed, as he tells Haydon, "only a little now and then, but nothing to speak of—being discontented, and as it were moulting." Yet such work as Keats did at this time was done at the very height of his powers, and included parts both of *Hyperion* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

Within a month of the date of the above extract the latter piece was finished, having been written out during a visit which Keats and Brown paid in Sussex in the latter part of January (1819). They staid for a few days with the father of their friend Dilke in Chichester, and for nearly a fortnight with his sister and brother-in-law, the Snooks, at Bedhampton, close by. Keats liked his hosts and received pleasure from his visit; but his health kept him much indoors, his only outings being to "a couple of dowager card-parties," and to a gathering of country clergy on a wet day, at the consecration of a chapel for converted Jews. The latter ceremony jarred on his nerves, and caused him to write afterwards to his brother an entertaining

splenetic diatribe on the clerical character and physiognomy. During his stay at Chichester he also seems to have begun, or at any rate conceived, the poem on the *Eve of St. Mark*, which he never finished, and which remains so interesting a pre-Raphaelite fragment in his work.

Returning at the beginning of February, Keats resumed his life at Hampstead under Brown's roof. He saw much less society than the winter before, the state of his throat compelling him, for one thing, generally to avoid the night air. But the chief cause of his seclusion was no doubt the passion which was beginning to engross him, and to deaden his interest in the other relations of life. The stages by which it grew on him we cannot follow. His own account of the matter to Fanny Brawne was that he had written himself her vassal within a week of their first meeting. His real first feeling for her, as we can see by his letters written at the time, had been one—the most perilous indeed to peace of mind—of strong mixed attraction and aversion. He might seem to have got no farther by the 14th of February, when he writes to his brother and sister-in-law in America, "Miss Brawne and I have every now and then a chat and a tiff;" but this is rather to be taken as an instance of his extreme general reticence on the subject, and it is probable that by this time, if not sooner, the attachment was in fact avowed and the engagement made. The secret violence of Keats's passion, and the restless physical jealousy which accompanied it, betray themselves in the verses addressed *To Fanny*, which belong apparently to this date. They are written very unequally, but with his true and brilliant felicity of touch here and there. The occasion is the presence of his mistress at some dance:

"Who now with greedy looks, eats up my feast?
What stare outfaces now my silver moon?"

Ah! keep that hand unravished at the least;
Let, let the amorous burn—
But, pr'ythee, do not turn
The current of your heart from me so soon,
O! save, in charity,
The quickest pulse for me.

Save it for me, sweet love! though music breathe
Voluptuous visions into the warm air,
Though swimming through the dance's dangerous wreath;
Be like an April day,
Smiling and cold and gay,
A temperate lily, temperate as fair;
Then, Heaven! there will be
A warmer June for me."

If Keats thus found in verse occasional relief from the violence of his feelings, he sought for none in his correspondence either with his brother or his friends. Except in the lightest passing allusion, he makes no direct mention of Miss Brawne in his letters; partly, no doubt, from mere excess of sensitiveness, dreading to profane his treasure; partly because he knew, and could not bear the thought, that both his friends and hers, in so far as they guessed the attachment, looked on it unfavourably. Brown after a little while could hardly help being in the secret, inasmuch as when the Dilkes left Hampstead in April, and went to live at Westminster, the Brawnes again took their house; so that Keats and Brown thenceforth had the young lady and her family for next-door neighbours. Dilke himself, but apparently not till many months later, writes: "It is quite a settled thing between John Keats and Miss Brawne, God help them. It's a bad thing for them. The mother says she cannot prevent it, and her only hope is that it will go off. He don't like any one to look at her or speak to her." Other friends, including one so inti-

mate and so affectionate as Severn, never realised until Keats was on his death-bed that there had been an engagement, or that his relations with Miss Brawne had been other than those of ordinary intimacy between neighbours.

Intense and jealous as Keats's newly awakened passion was, it seemed at first to stimulate rather than distract him in the exercise of his now ripened poetic gift. The spring of this year, 1819, seems to repeat in a richer key the history of the last; fits of inspiration succeeding to fits of lassitude, and growing more frequent as the season advanced. Between the beginning of February and the beginning of June he wrote many of his best shorter poems, including apparently all except one of his six famous odes. About the middle of February he speaks of having taken a stroll among the marbles of the British Museum, and the ode *On Indolence* and the ode *On a Grecian Urn*, written two or three months later, show how the charm of ancient sculpture was at this time working in his mind. The fit of morning idleness which helped to inspire the former piece is recorded in his correspondence under the date of March 19th. The lines beginning "Bards of passion and of mirth" are dated the 26th of the same month. On the 15th of April he sends off to his brother, as the last poem he has written, the ode *To Psyche*, only less perfect and felicitous than that *On a Grecian Urn*. About a week later the nightingale would be beginning to sing. Presently it appeared that one had built her nest in Brown's garden, near his house.

"Keats," writes Brown, "felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast-table to the grass-plot under a plum, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books.

On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale. The writing was not well legible, and it was difficult to arrange the stanzas on so many scraps. With his assistance I succeeded, and this was his *Ode to a Nightingale*. . . . Immediately afterwards I searched for more of his (in reality) fugitive pieces, in which task, at my request, he again assisted me. . . . From that day he gave me permission to copy any verses he might write, and I fully availed myself of it. He cared so little for them himself, when once, as it appeared to me, his imagination was released from their influence, that he required a friend at hand to preserve them "

The above account perfectly agrees with what Keats had written towards the end of the summer before: "I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful, even if my night's labours should be burnt every morning, and no eye ever rest upon them." And yet for these odes Keats seems to have had a partiality; with that to *Psyche*, he tells his brother he has taken more pains than with anything he had ever written before; and Haydon has told how thrillingly, "in his low tremulous under-tone," he recited to him that to the nightingale as they walked one day in the Kilburn meadows.

During the winter and spring, while his faculties were thus absorbed between love and poetry, Keats had suffered his correspondence to flag, except only with Haydon, with his young sister Fanny, and with his brother and sister-in-law in America. About Christmas, Haydon, whose work had been interrupted by a weakness of the eyes, and whose borrowing powers were for the time being exhausted, had turned in his difficulties to Keats, of all men. With his usual generosity Keats had promised, only asking him to try the rich lovers of art first, that if the worst came to the worst he would help him with all

he had. Haydon in a few weeks returns to the charge: "My dear Keats—now I feel the want of your promised assistance. . . . Before the 20th, if you could help me, it would be nectar and manna and all the blessings of gratified thirst." Keats had intended for Haydon's relief some of the money due to him from his brother Tom's share in their grandmother's gift, which he expected his guardian to make over to him at once on his application. But difficulties of all sorts were raised, and after much correspondence, attendance in bankers' and solicitors' offices, and other ordeals harassing to the poetic mind, he had the annoyance of finding himself unable to do as he had hoped. When, by-and-by, Haydon writes, in the true borrower's vein, reproaching him with his promise, and his failure to keep it, Keats replies with perfect temper, explaining that he had supposed himself to have the necessary means in his hand, but has been baffled by unforeseen difficulties in getting possession of his money. Moreover, he finds that even if all he had were laid on the table, the intended loan would leave him barely enough to live on for two years.¹ Incidentally he mentions that he has already lent sums to various friends amounting in all to near £200, of which he expects the repayment late, if ever. The upshot of the matter was that Keats contrived somehow to lend Haydon thirty pounds. Three months later a law-suit, threatened by the widow of Captain Jennings against Mr. Abbey, in connection with the administration of the trust, had the effect for a time of stopping his supplies from that quarter altogether. Thereupon he very gently asks Haydon to make an effort to repay his loan; who not only made none—"he did not," says Keats, "seem to care much about it, but let me go without my

¹ See Appendix, p. 224.

money almost with nonchalance." This was too much even for Keats's patience. He declares that he shall never count Haydon a friend again; nevertheless he, by-and-by, let old affection resume its sway, and entered into the other's interests, and endured his exhortations as kindly as ever.

To his young sister Keats's letters during the same period are full of playful brotherly tenderness and careful advice; of regrets that she is kept so much from him by the scruples of Mr. and Mrs. Abbey; and of plans for coming over to see her at Walthamstow when the weather and his throat allow. He thinks of various little presents to please her—a selection of Tassie's pretty, and then popular, paste imitations of ancient gems—flowers—drawing materials—

"anything but live stock. Though I will not now be very severe on it, remembering how fond I used to be of Goldfinches, Tomtits, Minnows, Mice, Ticklebacks, Dace, Cock Salmons, and all the whole tribe of the Bushes and the Brooks; but verily they are better in the trees and the water—though I must confess even now a partiality for a handsome globe of gold-fish—then I would have it hold ten pails of water, and be fed continually fresh through a cool pipe, with another pipe to let through the floor—well ventilated they would preserve all their beautiful silver and crimson. Then I would put it before a handsome painted window, and shade it all round with Myrtles and Japonicas. I should like the window to open on to the Lake of Geneva—and there I'd sit and read all day, like the picture of somebody reading."

For some time, in these letters to his sister, Keats expresses a constant anxiety at getting no news from their brother George at the distant Kentucky settlement whither he and his bride had at their last advices been bound. In the middle of April news of them arrives, and he there-

upon sends off to them a long journal-letter which he has been writing up at intervals during the last two months. Among all the letters of Keats, this is perhaps the richest and most characteristic. It is full of the varied matter of his thoughts, excepting always his thoughts of love: these are only to be discerned in one trivial allusion, and more indistinctly in the vaguely passionate tenor of two sonnets which he sends among other specimens of his latest work in verse. One is that beginning "Why did I laugh to-night?" the other that, beautiful and moving despite flaws of execution, in which he describes a dream suggested by the Paolo and Francesca passage in Dante. For the rest he passes disconnectedly as usual—"it being an impossibility in grain," as Keats once wrote to Reynolds, "for my ink to stain otherwise"—from the vein of fun and freakishness to that of poetry and wisdom, with passages now of masterly intuition, and now of wandering and uncertain, almost always beautiful, speculative fancy, interspersed with expressions of the most generous spirit of family affection, or the most searching and unaffected disclosures of self-knowledge. Poetry and Beauty were the twin powers his soul had ever worshipped; but his devotion to poetry seemed thus far to promise him no reward either in fame or bread, while beauty had betrayed her servant, and become to him a scorching instead of a sustaining power, since his love for the beautiful in general had turned into a craving passion for the beauty of a particular girl. As his flesh began to faint in the service of these two, his soul turned often with a sense of comfort, at times even almost of ecstasy, towards the milder divinity of Death, whose image had never been unfamiliar to his thoughts:

"Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,
But Death intenser—Death is Life's high meed."

When he came down from these heights of feeling, and brought himself soberly to face the facts of his existence, Keats felt himself compelled, in those days while he was producing, "out of the mere yearning and fondness he had for the beautiful," poem after poem that are among the treasures of the English language, to consider whether as a practical matter he could or ought to continue to apply himself to literature at all. In spite of his magnanimous first reception of the *Blackwood* and *Quarterly* gibes, we can see that as time went on he began more and more to feel both his pride wounded and his prospects darkened by them. Reynolds had hit the mark, as to the material harm which the reviews were capable of inflicting, when he wrote, the year before: "Certain it is that hundreds of fashionable and flippant readers will henceforth set down this young poet as a pitiable and nonsensical writer, merely on the assertions of some single heartless critic who has just energy enough to despise what is good." Such in fact was exactly the reputation which *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly* had succeeded in making for Keats, except among a small private circle of admirers. Of praise and the thirst for praise he continues to speak in as manly and sane a tone as ever, especially in the two sonnets *On Fame*; and in the *Ode to Indolence* declares—

"For I would not be dieted with praise,
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce."

Again in the same ode he speaks of his "demon Poesy" as "a maiden most unmeek," whom he loves the better the more blame is heaped on her. At the same time he shows his sense of the practical position which the reviews had made for him when he writes to his brother: "These reviews are getting more and more powerful, especially the

Quarterly. . . . I was in hopes that as people saw, as they must do, all the trickery and iniquity of these plagues, they would scout them; but no, they are like the spectators at the Westminster cockpit, and do not care who wins or loses." And as a consequence he adds, presently, "I have been, at different times, turning it in my head whether I should go to Edinburgh and study for a physician. I am afraid I should not take kindly to it; I am sure I could not take fees; and yet I should like to do so; it is not worse than writing poems, and hanging them up to be fly-blown on the Review shambles." A little later he mentions to his sister Fanny an idea he has of taking a voyage or two as surgeon on board an East Indiaman. But Brown, more than ever impressed during these last months with the power and promise of his friend's genius, would not hear of this plan, and persuaded him to abandon it and throw himself again upon literature. Keats being for the moment unable to get at any of his money, Brown advanced him enough to live on through the summer; and it was agreed that he should go and work in the country, and that Brown should follow him.

Towards the end of July Keats accordingly left Hampstead, and went first to join his friend Rice in lodgings at Shanklin. Rice's health was at this time worse than ever, and Keats himself was far from well—his chest weak, his nerves unstrung, his heart, as we can see by his letters to Fanny Brawne, incessantly distracted between the pains and joys of love. These love-letters of Keats are written with little or none of the bright ease and play of mind which make his correspondence with his friends and family so attractive. Pleasant passages, indeed, occur in them, but in the main they are constrained and distressing, showing him a prey, despite his efforts to master himself and

be reasonable, to an almost abject intensity and fretfulness of passion. An enraptured but an untrustful lover, alternately rejoicing and chafing at his bondage, and passing through a hundred conflicting extremes of feeling in an hour, he found in the fever of work and composition his only antidote against the fever of his love-sickness. As long as Rice and he were together at Shanklin, the two ailing and anxious men, firm friends as they were, depressed and did each other harm. It was better when Brown with his settled health and spirits came to join them. Soon afterwards Rice left, and Brown and Keats then got to work diligently at the task they had set before themselves, that of writing a tragedy suitable for the stage. What other struggling man of letters has not at one time or another shared the hope which animated them, that this way lay the road to success and competence? Brown, whose Russian opera had made a hit in its day, and brought him in £500, was supposed to possess the requisite stage experience, and to him were assigned the plot and construction of the play, while Keats undertook to compose the dialogue. The subject was one taken from the history of the Emperor Otho the Great. The two friends sat opposite each other at the same table; and Keats wrote scene after scene as Brown sketched it out to him, in each case without enquiring what was to come next, until the end of the fourth act, when he took the conduct of the rest into his own hands. Besides the joint work by means of which he thus hoped, at least in sanguine hours, to find an escape from material difficulties, Keats was busily engaged by himself in writing a new Greek tale in rhymed heroics, *Lamia*. But a cloud of depression continued to hang over him. The climate of Shanklin was against him: their lodgings were under the cliff, and from the south-east, as he afterwards wrote, "came the damps of the sea,

which having no egress, the air would for days together take on an unhealthy idiosyncrasy altogether enervating and weakening as a city smoke." After a stay of five or six weeks the friends made up their minds to change their quarters, and went in the second week of August to Winchester. The old cathedral city, with its peaceful closes breathing antiquity, its clear-coursing streams and beautiful elm-shadowed meadow walks, and the nimble and pure air of its surrounding downs, exactly suited Keats, who quickly improved both in health and spirits. The days which he spent here, from the middle of August to the middle of October, were the last good days of his life. Working with a steady intensity of application, he managed to steel himself for the time being against the importunity of his passion, although never without a certain feverishness in the effort.

His work continued to be chiefly on *Lamia*, with the concluding part of *Otho* and the beginning of a new tragedy on the story of King Stephen; in this last he laboured alone, without accepting help from Brown. Early in September Brown left Winchester to go on a visit to Bedhampton. Immediately afterwards a letter from America compelled Keats to go to town and arrange with Mr. Abbey for the despatch of fresh remittances to his brother George. He dared not, to use his own words, "venture into the fire" by going to see his mistress at Hampstead, but staid apparently with Mr. Taylor in Fleet Street, and was back on the fourth day at Winchester, where he spent the following ten days or fortnight in solitude. During this interval he took up *Hyperion* again, but made up his mind to go no farther with it, having got to feel its style and method too Miltonic and artificial. *Lamia* he had finished, and his chief present occupation was in revising the *Eve of St. Agnes*, studying Italian in the pages of Ariosto,

and writing up one of his long and full journal-letters to brother and sister George. The season was fine, and the beauty of the walks and the weather entering into his spirit, prompted also in these days the last, and one certainly of the happiest of his odes, that *To Autumn*. To the fragment of *St. Mark's Eve*, begun or planned, as we have seen, the January before, he now added lines inspired at once by the spirit of city quietude, which his letters show to have affected him deeply here at Winchester, and by the literary example of Chatterton, for whom his old admiration had of late returned in full force.

The wholesome brightness of the early autumn continuing to sustain and soothe him, Keats made in these days a vigorous effort to rally his moral powers, to banish overpassionate and morbid feelings, and to put himself on a right footing with the world. The letter to America already mentioned, and others written at the same time to Reynolds, Taylor, Dilke, Brown, and Haydon, are full of evidences of this spirit. The ill success of his brother in his American speculations shall serve, he is determined, as a spur to his own exertions; and now that real troubles are upon them, he will show that he can bear them better than those of imagination. The imaginary nail a man down for a sufferer, as on a cross; the real spur him up into an agent. He has been passing his time between reading, writing, and fretting; the last he now intends to give up, and stick to the other two. He does not consider he has any just cause of complaint against the world; he has done nothing as yet except for the amusement of a few people predisposed for sentiment, and is convinced that anything really fine will make its way. "What reviewers can put a hindrance to must be a nothing—or mediocre, which is worse." With reference to his own plans for the

future, he is determined to trust no longer to mere hopes of ultimate success, whether from plays or poems, but to turn to the natural resource of a man "fit for nothing but literature," and needing to support himself by his pen: the resource, that is, of journalism and reviewing. "I will write, on the liberal side of the question, for whoever will pay me. I have not known yet what it is to be diligent. I purpose living in town in a cheap lodging, and endeavouring, for a beginning, to get the theatricals of some paper. When I can afford to compose deliberate poems, I will." These words are from a letter written to Brown on the 22d of September; and further on in the same letter we find evidence of the honourable spirit of independence and unselfishness towards his friends which went together in Keats, as it too rarely does, with an affectionate willingness to accept their services at a pinch. He had been living since May on a loan from Brown and an advance from Taylor, and was uneasy at putting the former to a sacrifice. The subject, he says, is often in his mind,

"and the end of my speculations is always an anxiety for your happiness. This anxiety will not be one of the least incitements to the plan I propose pursuing. I had got into a habit of mind of looking towards you as a help in all difficulties. You will see it is a duty I owe myself to break the neck of it. I do nothing for my subsistence—make no exertion. At the end of another year you shall applaud me, not for verses, but for conduct."

Brown, returning to Winchester a few days later, found his friend unshaken in the same healthy resolutions, and however loth to lose his company, and doubtful of his power to live the life he proposed, respected their motives too much to contend against them. It was accordingly settled that the two friends should part, Brown returning to his own house at Hampstead, while Keats went to live by himself in London, and look out for employment on the press.

CHAPTER VII.

Isabella.—*Hyperion.*—*The Eve of St. Agnes.*—*The Eve of St. Mark.*—*La Belle Dame Sans Merci.*—*Lamia.*—The Odes.—The Plays.

DURING the twenty months ending with his return from Winchester, as last narrated, Keats had been able, even while health and peace of mind and heart deserted him, to produce in quick succession the series of poems which give us the true measure of his powers. In the sketches and epistles of his first volume we have seen him beginning, timidly and with no clearness of aim, to make trial of his poetical resources. A year afterwards he had leapt, to use his own words, headlong into the sea, and boldly tried his strength on the composition of a long mythological romance—half romance, half parable of that passion for universal beauty of which he felt in his own bosom the restless and compulsive workings. In the execution he had done injustice to the power of poetry that was in him by letting both the exuberance of fancy and invention, and the caprice of rhyme, run away with him, and by substituting for the worn-out verbal currency of the last century a semi-Elizabethan coinage of his own, less acceptable by habit to the literary sense, and often of not a whit greater real poetic value. The experiment was rash, but when he next wrote, it became manifest that it had not been made in vain. After *Endymion* his work threw off, not indeed entirely its faults, but all its weakness and in-

effectiveness, and shone for the first time with a full "effluence" (the phrase is Landor's) "of power and light."¹

His next poem of importance was *Isabella*, planned and begun, as we saw, in February, 1818, and finished in the course of the next two months at Teignmouth. The subject is taken from the well-known chapter of Boccaccio which tells of the love borne by a damsel of Messina for a youth in the employ of her merchant-brothers, with its tragic close and pathetic sequel.² Keats for some reason transfers the scene of the story from Messina to Florence. Nothing can be less sentimental than Boccaccio's temper, nothing more direct and free from superfluity than his style. Keats, invoking him, asks pardon for his own work as what it truly is—"An echo of thee in the North-wind sung." Not only does the English poet set the southern story in a framework of northern landscape, telling us of the Arno, for instance, how its stream

"Gurgles through straitened banks, and still doth fan
Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream
Keeps head against the freshets,"

he further adorns and amplifies it in a northern manner, enriching it with tones of sentiment and colours of romance, and brooding over every image of beauty or passion as he calls it up. These things he does—but no longer inordinately, as heretofore. His powers of imagination and of

¹ See Appendix, p. 224.

² *Decamerone*, Giorn., iv. nov. 5. A very different metrical treatment of the same subject was attempted and published, almost simultaneously with that of Keats, by Barry Cornwall in his *Sicilian Story* (1820). Of the metrical tales from Boccaccio which Reynolds had agreed to write concurrently with Keats (see above, p. 85), two were finished and published by him after Keats's death in the volume called *A Garden of Florence* (1821).

expression have alike gained strength and discipline; and through the shining veils of his poetry his creations make themselves seen and felt in living shape, action, and motive. False touches and misplaced beauties are indeed not wanting. For example, in the phrase

"his erewhile timid lips grew bold
And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme,"

we have an effusively false touch, in the sugared taste not infrequent in his earliest verses. And in the call of the wicked brothers to Lorenzo—

"To-day we purpose, aye this hour we mount
To spur three leagues towards the Apennine.
Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count
His dewy rosary on the eglantine"—

the last two lines are a beauty, indeed, and of the kind most characteristic of the poet, yet a beauty (as Leigh Hunt long ago pointed out) misplaced in the mouths that utter it. Moreover, the language of *Isabella* is still occasionally slipshod, and there are turns and passages where we feel, as we felt so often in *Endymion*, that the poetic will has abdicated to obey the chance dictation or suggestion of the rhyme. But these are the minor blemishes of a poem otherwise conspicuous for power and charm.

For his Italian story Keats chose an Italian metre, the octave stanza introduced in English by Wyatt and Sidney, and naturalised before long by Daniel, Drayton, and Edward Fairfax. Since their day the stanza had been little used in serious poetry, though Frere and Byron had lately revived it for the poetry of light narrative and satire, the purpose for which the epigrammatic snap and suddenness of the closing couplet in truth best fit it. Keats, however, contrived generally to avoid this effect, and handles the

measure flowingly and well in a manner suited to his tale of pathos. Over the purely musical and emotional resources of his art he shows a singular command in stanzas like that beginning, "O Melancholy, linger here awhile," repeated with variations as a kind of melodious interlude of the main narrative. And there is a brilliant alertness of imagination in such episodical passages as that where he pauses to realise the varieties of human toil contributing to the wealth of the merchant brothers. But the true test of a poem like this is that it should combine, at the essential points and central moments of action and passion, imaginative vitality and truth with beauty and charm. This test *Isabella* admirably bears. For instance, in the account of the vision which appears to the heroine of her lover's mouldering corpse:

"Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy-bright
With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof
From the poor girl by magic of their light."

With what a true poignancy of human tenderness is the story of the apparition invested by this touch, and all its charnel horror and grimness mitigated! Or again in the stanzas describing *Isabella's* actions at her lover's burial-place:

"She gazed into the fresh thrown mould, as though
One glance did fully all its secrets tell;
Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know,
Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well;
Upon the murderous spot she seem'd to grow,
Like to a native lily of the dell:
Then with her knife, all sudden, she began
To dig more fervently than misers can.

"Soon she turn'd up a soiled glove, whereon
Her silk had play'd in purple phantasies;

She kiss'd it with a lip more chill than stone,
And put it in her bosom, where it dries
And freezes utterly unto the bone
Those dainties made to still an infant's cries :
Then 'gan she work again ; nor stay'd her care,
But to throw back at times her veiling hair."

The lines are not all of equal workmanship, but the scene is realised with unerring vision. The swift despairing gaze of the girl, anticipating with too dire a certainty the realisation of her dream ; the simile in the third and fourth lines, emphasizing the clearness of that certainty, and at the same time relieving its terror by an image of beauty ; the new simile of the lily, again striking the note of beauty, while it intensifies the impression of her rooted fixity of posture and purpose ; the sudden solution of that fixity, with the final couplet, into vehement action, as she begins to dig "more fervently than misers can" (what a commentary on the relative strength of passions might be drawn from this simple text!) ; then the first reward of her toil, in the shape of a relic, not ghastly, but beautiful both in itself and for the tenderness of which it is a token ; her womanly action in kissing it and putting it in her bosom, while all the woman and mother in her is in the same words revealed to us as blighted by the tragedy of her life ; then the resumption and continuance of her labours, with gestures once more of vital dramatic truth as well as grace—to imagine and to write like this is the privilege of the best poets only, and even the best have not often combined such concentrated force and beauty of conception with such a limpid and flowing ease of narrative. Poetry had always come to Keats, as he considered it ought to come, as naturally as leaves to a tree ; and now that it came of a quality like this, he had fairly earned the right,

which his rash youth had too soon arrogated, to look down on the fine artificers of the school of Pope. In comparison with the illuminating power of true imaginative poetry, the closest rhetorical condensations of that school seem loose and thin, their most glittering points and aphorisms dull; nay, those who admire them most justly will know better than to think the two kinds of writing comparable.

After the completion of *Isabella* followed the Scotch tour, of which the only poetic fruits of value were the lines on Meg Merrilies and those on Fingal's Cave. Returning in shaken health to the bedside of a brother mortally ill, Keats plunged at once into the most arduous poetic labour he had yet undertaken. This was the composition of *Hyperion*.¹ The subject had been long in his mind, and both in the text and the preface of *Endymion* he indicated his intention to attempt it. At first he thought of the poem to be written as a "romance;" but under the influence of *Paradise Lost*, and no doubt also considering the height and vastness of the subject, his plan changed to that of a blank verse epic in ten books. His purpose was to sing the Titanomachia, or warfare of the earlier Titanic dynasty with the later Olympian dynasty of the Greek gods; and in particular one episode of that warfare, the dethronement of the sun-god Hyperion and the assumption of his kindgom by Apollo. Critics, even intelligent critics, sometimes complain that Keats should have taken this and other subjects of his art from what they call the "dead" mythology of ancient Greece. As if that mythology could ever die; as if the ancient fables, in passing out of the transitory state of things be-

¹ As to the date when *Hyperion* was written, see Appendix, p. 225; and as to the error by which Keats's later recast of his work has been taken for an earlier draft, *ibid.*, p. 226.

lieved into the state of things remembered and cherished in imagination, had not put on a second life more enduring and more fruitful than the first. Faiths as faiths perish one after another, but each in passing away bequeaths for the enrichment of the after-world whatever elements it has contained of imaginative or moral truth or beauty. The polytheism of ancient Greece, embodying the instinctive effort of the brightest-gifted human race to explain its earliest experiences of nature and civilization, of the thousand moral and material forces, cruel or kindly, which environ and control the life of man on earth, is rich beyond measure in such elements; and if the modern world at any time fails to value them, it is the modern mind which is in so far dead, and not they. One of the great symptoms of returning vitality in the imagination of Europe towards the close of the last century, was its awakening to the forgotten charm of past modes of faith and life. When men, in the earlier part of that century, spoke of Greek antiquity, it was in stale and borrowed terms which showed that they had never felt its power; just as, when they spoke of nature, it was in set phrases that showed that they had never looked at her. On matters of daily social experience the gifts of observation and of reason were brilliantly exercised, but all the best thoughts of the time were thoughts of the street, the mart, and the assembly. The human genius was for the time being like some pilgrim long detained within city walls, and unused to see or think of anything beyond them. At length resuming its march, it emerged on open ground, where it fell to enjoying with a forgotten zest the beauties of the earth and sky, and whence, at the same time, it could turn back to gaze on regions it had long left behind, discerning with new clearness and a new emotion here, under cloud

and rainbow, the forests and spired cities of the Middle Age, there, in serener light, the hills and havens and level fanes of Hellas.

The great leader and pioneer of the modern spirit on this new phase of its pilgrimage was Goethe, who with deliberate effort and self-discipline climbed to heights commanding an equal survey over the mediæval and the classic past. We had in England had an earlier, shyer, and far less effectual pioneer in Gray. As time went on, poet after poet arose and sang more freely, one the glories of nature, another the enchantments of the Middle Age, another the Greek beauty and joy of life. Keats, when his time came, showed himself, all young and untutored as he was, freshly and powerfully inspired to sing of all three alike. He does not, as we have said, write of Greek things in a Greek manner. Something, indeed, in *Hyperion*—at least in the first two books—he has caught from *Paradise Lost* of the high restraint and calm which was common to the Greeks and Milton. But to realise how far he is in workmanship from the Greek purity and precision of outline, and firm definition of individual images, we have only to think of his palace of Hyperion, with its vague, far-dazzling pomps and phantom terrors of coming doom. This is the most sustained and celebrated passage of the poem. Or let us examine one of its most characteristic images from nature:

“As when, upon a tranced summer night,
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir.”

Not to the simplicity of the Greek, but to the complexity of the modern sentiment of nature, it belongs to try and

express, by such a concourse of metaphors and epithets, every effect at once, to the most fugitive, which a forest scene by starlight can have upon the mind: the pre-eminence of the oaks among the other trees—their aspect of human venerableness—their verdure, unseen in the darkness—the sense of their preternatural stillness and suspended life in an atmosphere that seems to vibrate with mysterious influences communicated between earth and sky.¹

But though Keats sees the Greek world from afar, he sees it truly. The Greek touch is not his, but in his own rich and decorated English way he writes with a sure insight into the vital meaning of Greek ideas. For the story of the war of Titans and Olympians he had nothing to guide him except scraps from the ancient writers, principally Hesiod, as retailed by the compilers of classical dictionaries; and from the scholar's point of view his version, we can see, would at many points have been arbitrary, mixing up Latin conceptions and nomenclature with Greek, and introducing much new matter of his own invention. But as to the essential meaning of that warfare and its result—the dethronement of an older and ruder worship by one more advanced and humane, in which ideas of ethics and of arts held a larger place beside ideas of nature and her brute powers—as to this, it could not possibly be divined more truly, or illustrated with more beauty and force, than by Keats in the speech of Oceanus in the Sec-

¹ If we want to see Greek themes treated in a Greek manner by predecessors or contemporaries of Keats, we can do so—though only on a cameo scale—in the best idyls of Chénier in France, as *L'Aveugle*, or *Le Jeune Malade*, or of Landor in England, as the *Hamadryad*, or *Enallos and Cymodamia*; poems which would hardly have been written otherwise at Alexandria in the days of Theocritus.

ond Book. Again, in conceiving and animating these colossal shapes of early gods, with their personalities between the elemental and the human, what masterly justice of instinct does he show—to take one point only—in the choice of similitudes, drawn from the vast inarticulate sounds of nature, by which he seeks to make us realise their voices. Thus of the assembled gods when Saturn is about to speak :

“There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines
When Winter lifts his voice ; there is a noise
Among immortals when a God gives sign,
With hushing finger, how he means to load
His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought,
With thunder, and with music, and with pomp :
Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines.”

Again, of Oceanus answering his fallen chief :

“So ended Saturn ; and the God of the Sea,
Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
But cogitation in his watery shades,
Arose, with locks not oozy, and began
In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue
Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands.”

And once more, of Clymene followed by Enceladus in debate :

“So far her voice flow’d on, like timorous brook
That, lingering along a pebbled coast,
Doth fear to meet the sea ; but sea it met,
And shudder’d ; for the overwhelming voice
Of huge Enceladus swallow’d it in wrath ;
The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves
In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks,
Came booming thus.”

This second book of *Hyperion*, relating the council of the dethroned Titans, has neither the sublimity of the first, where the solemn opening vision of Saturn fallen is followed by the resplendent one of Hyperion threatened in his "lucent empire," nor the intensity of the unfinished third, where we leave Apollo undergoing a convulsive change under the afflatus of Mnemosyne, and about to put on the full powers of his godhead. But it has a rightness and controlled power of its own which places it, to my mind, quite on a level with the other two.

With a few slips and inequalities, and one or two instances of verbal incorrectness, *Hyperion*, as far as it was written, is indeed one of the grandest poems in our language, and in its grandeur seems one of the easiest and most spontaneous. Keats, however, had never been able to apply himself to it continuously, but only by fits and starts. Partly this was due to the distractions of bereavement, of material anxiety, and of dawning passion amid which it was begun and continued; partly (if we may trust the statement of the publishers) to disappointment at the reception of *Endymion*; and partly, it is clear, to something not wholly congenial to his powers in the task itself. When, after letting the poem lie by through the greater part of the spring and summer of 1819, he in September made up his mind to give it up, he wrote to Reynolds explaining his reasons as follows: "There were too many Miltonic inversions in it—Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful, or rather artist's, humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations. English ought to be kept up." In the same connection he declares that Chatterton is the purest writer in the English language. "He has no French idiom or particles, like Chaucer; it is genuine English idiom in English words." In writing about the

same time to his brother, he again expresses similar opinions both as to Milton and Chatterton.

The influence, and something of the majesty, of *Paradise Lost* are in truth to be found in *Hyperion*; and the debate of the fallen Titans in the second book is obviously to some extent modelled on the debate of the fallen angels. But Miltonic the poem hardly is in any stricter sense. Passing by those general differences that arise from the contrast of Milton's age with Keats's youth, of his austerity with Keats's luxuriance of spirit, and speaking of palpable and technical differences only, in the matter of rhythm Keats's blank verse has not the flight of Milton's. Its periods do not wheel through such stately evolutions to so solemn and far-foreseen a close, though it indeed lacks neither power nor music, and ranks unquestionably with the finest blank-verse written since Milton—beside that of Shelley's *Alastor*, perhaps a little below that of Wordsworth, when Wordsworth is at his infrequent best. As to diction and the poetic use of words, Keats shows almost as masterly an instinct as Milton himself; but while of Milton's diction the characteristic colour is derived from reading and meditation, from an impassioned conversance with the contents of books, the characteristic colour of Keats's diction is rather derived from conversance with nature and with the extreme refinements of physical sensation. He is no match for Milton in a passage of this kind:

"Eden stretch'd her line
From Auran eastward to the royal towers
Of great Seleucia, built by Grecian kings,
Or where the sons of Eden long before
Dwelt in Telassar."

But then neither is Milton a match for Keats in work like this:

"Throughout all the isle
There was no covert, no retired cave
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess."

After the pomp and glow of learned allusion, the second chief technical note of Milton's style is his partiality for a Latin use of the relative pronoun and the double negative, and for scholarly Latin turn and constructions generally. Already in *Isabella* Keats is to be found attempting both notes, thus :

"With duller steel than the Persean sword
They cut away no formless monster's head."

Similar Miltonic echoes occur in *Hyperion*, as in the introduction already quoted to the speech of Oceanus ; or again thus :

"Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes,
Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies."

But they are not frequent, nor had Keats adopted as much of Milton's technical manner as he seems to have supposed ; yet he had adopted more of it than was natural to him or than he cared to maintain.

In turning away from Milton to Chatterton, he was going back to one of his first loves in literature. What he says of Chatterton's words and idioms seems paradoxical enough, as applied to the archaic jargon concocted by the Bristol boy out of Kersey's *Dictionary*.¹ But it is true that through that jargon can be discerned, in the Rowley

¹ We are not surprised to hear of Keats, with his instinct for the best, that what he most liked in Chatterton's work was the minstrel's song in *Ælla*, that *fantasia*, so to speak, executed really with genius on the theme of one of Ophelia's songs in *Hamlet*.

poems, not only an ardent feeling for romance and an extraordinary facility in composition, but a remarkable gift of plain and flowing construction. And after Keats had for some time moved, not perfectly at his ease, though with results to us so masterly, in the paths of Milton, we find him in fact tempted aside on an excursion into the regions beloved by Chatterton. We know not how much of *Hyperion* had been written when he laid it aside in January to take up the composition of *St. Agnes's Eve*, that unsurpassed example—nay, must we not rather call it unequalled?—of the pure charm of coloured and romantic narrative in English verse. As this poem does not attempt the elemental grandeur of *Hyperion*, so neither does it approach the human pathos and passion of *Isabella*. Its personages appeal to us, not so much humanly and in themselves as by the circumstances, scenery, and atmosphere amidst which we see them move. Herein lies the strength, and also the weakness, of modern romance—its strength, inasmuch as the charm of the mediæval colour and mystery is unfailing for those who feel it at all; its weakness, inasmuch as under the influence of that charm both writer and reader are too apt to forget the need for human and moral truth; and without these no great literature can exist.

Keats takes in this poem the simple, almost threadbare theme of the love of an adventurous youth for the daughter of a hostile house—a story wherein something of Romeo and Juliet is mixed with something of young Lochinvar—and brings it deftly into association with the old popular belief as to the way a maiden might on this anniversary win sight of her lover in a dream. Choosing happily for such a purpose the Spenserian stanza, he adds to the melodious grace, the “sweet-slipping movement,” as it

has been called, of Spenser, a transparent ease and directness of construction; and with this ease and directness combines (wherein lies the great secret of his ripened art) a never-failing richness and concentration of poetic meaning and suggestion. From the opening stanza, which makes us feel the chill of the season to our bones—telling us first of its effect on the wild and tame creatures of wood and field, and next how the frozen breath of the old beadsman in the chapel aisle "seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death"—from thence to the close, where the lovers make their way past the sleeping porter and the friendly bloodhound into the night, the poetry seems to throb in every line with the life of imagination and beauty. It indeed plays in great part about the external circumstances and decorative adjuncts of the tale. But in handling these Keats's method is the reverse of that by which some writers vainly endeavour to rival in literature the effects of the painter and sculptor. He never writes for the eye merely, but vivifies everything he touches, telling even of dead and senseless things in terms of life, movement, and feeling. Thus the monuments in the chapel aisle are brought before us, not by any effort of description, but solely through our sympathy with the shivering fancy of the beadsman:

"Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails."

Even into the sculptured heads of the corbels in the banqueting hall the poet strikes life:

"The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With wings blown back, and hands put cross-wise on their
breasts."

The painted panes in the chamber window, instead of trying to pick out their beauties in detail, he calls

“Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes
As are the tiger-moth’s deep-damask’d wings”

—a gorgeous phrase which leaves the widest range to the colour-imagination of the reader, giving it at the same time a sufficient clue by the simile drawn from a particular specimen of nature’s blazonry. In the last line of the same stanza—

“A shielded scutcheon blush’d with blood of queens and kings”

—the word “blush” makes the colour seem to come and go, while the mind is at the same time sent travelling from the maiden’s chamber on thoughts of her lineage and ancestral fame. Observation, I believe, shows that moonlight has not the power to transmit the hues of painted glass as Keats in this celebrated passage represents it. Let us be grateful for the error, if error it is, which has led him to heighten, by these saintly splendours of colour, the sentiment of a scene wherein a voluptuous glow is so exquisitely attempered with chivalrous chastity and awe. When Madeline unclasps her jewels, a weaker poet would have dwelt on their lustre or other visible qualities; Keats puts those aside, and speaks straight to our spirits in an epithet breathing with the very life of the wearer—“her warmed jewels.” When Lorenzo spreads the feast of dainties beside his sleeping mistress, we are made to feel how those ideal and rare sweets of sense surround and minister to her, not only with their own natural richness, but with the associations and the homage of all far countries whence they have been gathered—

“From silken Samarcand to cedar’d Lebanon.”

If the unique charm of the *Eve of St. Agnes* lies thus in the richness and vitality of the accessory and decorative images, the actions and emotions of the personages are hardly less happily conceived, as far as they go. What can be better touched than the figures of the beadsman and the nurse, who live just long enough to share in the wonders of the night, and die quietly of age when their parts are over:¹ especially the debate of old Angela with Lorenzo, and her gentle treatment by her mistress on the stair? Madeline is exquisite throughout, but most of all, I think, at two moments: first when she has just entered her chamber—

"No uttered syllable, or, woe betide:
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side"—

and afterwards when, awakening, she finds her lover beside her, and contrasts his bodily presence with her dream—

"‘Ah Porphyro!’ said she, ‘but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear
Made tunable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear.
How changed thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear.’”

Criticism may urge, indeed, that in the “growing faint” of Porphyro, and in his “warm unnerved arm,” we have

¹ A critic, not often so in error, has contended that the deaths of the beadsman and Angela in the concluding stanza are due to the exigencies of rhyme. On the contrary, they are foreseen from the first: that of the beadsman in the lines,

“But no—already had his death-bell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung;”

that of Angela where she calls herself

“A poor, weak, palsy-stricken church-yard thing,
Whose passing bell may ere the midnight toll.”

a touch of that swooning abandonment to which Keats's heroes are too subject. But it is the slightest possible; and after all the trait belongs not more to the poet individually than to his time. Lovers in prose romances of that date are constantly overcome in like manner. And we may well pardon Porphyro his weakness, in consideration of the spirit which has led him to his lady's side in defiance of her "whole bloodthirsty race," and will bear her safely, this night of happy marvels over, to the home "beyond the southern moors" that he has prepared for her.¹

Nearly allied with the *Eve of St. Agnes* is the fragment in the four-foot ballad metre which Keats composed on the parallel popular belief connected with the eve of St. Mark. This piece was planned, as we saw, at Chichester, and written, it appears, partly there and partly at Winchester six months later: the name of the heroine, Bertha, seems farther to suggest associations with Canterbury. Impressions of all these three cathedral cities which Keats knew are combined, no doubt, in the picture of which the fragment consists. I have said picture, but there are two: one the out-door picture of the city streets in their spring freshness and Sabbath peace; the other the in-door picture of the maiden reading in her quaint fire-lit chamber. Each in its way is of an admirable vividness and charm. The belief about St. Mark's Eve was that a person stationed near a church porch at twilight on that anniversary would see entering the church the apparitions of those about to die, or be brought near death, in the ensuing year. Keats's fragment breaks off before the story is well engaged, and it is not easy to see how his opening would have led up to incidents illustrating this belief. Neither is it clear wheth-

¹ See Appendix, p. 225.

er he intended to place them in mediæval or in relatively modern times. The demure Protestant air which he gives the Sunday streets, the Oriental furniture and curiosities of the lady's chamber, might seem to indicate the latter; but we must remember that he was never strict in his archæology — witness, for instance, the line which tells how "the long carpets rose along the gusty floor" in the *Eve of St. Agnes*. The interest of the *St. Mark's* fragment, then, lies not in moving narrative or the promise of it, but in two things: first, its pictorial brilliance and charm of workmanship; and second, its relation to, and influence on, later English poetry. Keats in this piece anticipates in a remarkable degree the feeling and method of the modern pre-Raphaelite schools. The in-door scene of the girl over her book, in its insistent delight in vivid colour and the minuteness of far-sought suggestive and picturesque detail, is perfectly in the spirit of Rossetti (whom we know that the fragment deeply impressed and interested)—of his pictures even more than of his poems; while in the out-door work we seem to find forestalled the very tones and cadences of Mr. Morris in some tale of the *Earthly Paradise*:

"The city streets were clean and fair
From wholesome drench of April rains;
And on the western window panes
The chilly sunset faintly told
Of unmatured green valleys cold,
Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
Of rivers new with springtide sedge."

Another poem of the same period, romantic in a different sense, is *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. The title is taken from that of a poem by Alain Chartier—the secretary and court poet of Charles VI. and Charles VII. of France—of

which an English translation used to be attributed to Chaucer, and is included in the early editions of his works. This title had caught Keats's fancy, and in the *Eve of St. Agnes* he makes Lorenzo waken Madeline by playing beside her bed

"an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd 'La belle dame sans merci.'"

The syllables continuing to haunt him, he wrote in the course of the spring or summer (1819) a poem of his own on the theme, which has no more to do with that of Chartier than Chartier has really to do with Provence.¹ Keats's ballad can hardly be said to tell a story, but rather sets before us, with imagery drawn from the mediæval world of enchantment and knight-errantry, a type of the wasting power of love, when either adverse fate or deluded choice makes of love not a blessing but a bane. The plight which the poet thus shadows forth is partly that of his own soul in thralldom. Every reader must feel how truly the imagery expresses the passion; how powerfully, through these fascinating old-world symbols, the universal heart of man is made to speak. To many students (of whom the present writer is one) the union of infinite tenderness with a weird intensity, the conciseness and purity of the poetic form, the wild yet simple magic of the cadences, the perfect "inevitable" union of sound and sense, make of *La Belle Dame sans Merci* the master-piece, not only among the shorter poems of Keats, but even (if any single master-piece must be chosen) among them all.

¹ Chartier was born at Bayeux. His *Belle Dame sans Merci* is a poem of over eighty stanzas, the introduction in narrative and the rest in dialogue, setting forth the obduracy shown by a lady to her wooer, and his consequent despair and death. (For the date of composition of Keats's poem, see Appendix, p. 226.)

Before finally giving up *Hyperion*, Keats had conceived and written, during his summer months at Shanklin and Winchester, another narrative poem on a Greek subject, but one of those where Greek life and legend come nearest to the mediæval, and give scope both for scenes of wonder and witchcraft, and for the stress and vehemence of passion. I speak, of course, of *Lamia*, the story of the serpent-lady, both enchantress and victim of enchantments, who loves a youth of Corinth, and builds for him by her art a palace of delights, until their happiness is shattered by the scrutiny of intrusive and cold-blooded wisdom. Keats had found the germ of the story, quoted from Philostratus, in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. In versifying it he went back once more to rhymed heroics, handling them, however, not as in *Endymion*, but in a manner founded on that of Dryden, with a free use of the Alexandrine, a more sparing one of the overflow and the irregular pause, and of disyllabic rhymes none at all. In the measure as thus treated by Keats there is a fire and grace of movement, a lithe and serpentine energy, well suited to the theme, and as effective in its way as the victorious march of Dryden himself. Here is an example where the poetry of Greek mythology is finely woven into the rhetoric of love:

"Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, goddess, see
Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
For pity do not this sad heart belie—
Even as thou vanishest so I shall die.
Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!
To thy far wishes will thy streams obey;
Stay! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
Alone they can drink up the morning rain;
Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine?"

And here an instance of the power and reality of scenic imagination :

“ As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
Companion'd or alone; while many a light
Flar'd, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found them cluster'd in the cornic'd shade
Of some arch'd temple door, or dusty colonnade.”

No one can deny the truth of Keats's own criticism on *Lamia* when he says, “ I am certain there is that sort of fire in it which must take hold of people in some way—give them either pleasant or unpleasant sensation.” There is, perhaps, nothing in all his writing so vivid, or that so burns itself in upon the mind, as the picture of the serpent-woman awaiting the touch of Hermes to transform her, followed by the agonized process of the transformation itself. Admirably told, though perhaps somewhat disproportionately for its place in the poem, is the introductory episode of Hermes and his nymph; admirably again the concluding scene, where the merciless gaze of the philosopher exorcises his pupil's dream of love and beauty, and the lover in forfeiting his illusion forfeits life. This thrilling vividness of narration in particular points, and the fine melodious vigour of much of the verse, have caused some students to give *Lamia* almost the first, if not the first, place among Keats's narrative poems. But surely for this it is in some parts too feverish and in others too

unequal. It contains descriptions not entirely successful, as, for instance, that of the palace reared by Lamia's magic, which will not bear comparison with other and earlier dream-palaces of the poet's building. And it has reflective passages, as that in the first book beginning, "Let the mad poets say whate'er they please," and the first fifteen lines of the second, where, from the winning and truly poetic ease of his style at its best, Keats relapses into something too like Leigh Hunt's and his own early strain of affected ease and fireside triviality. He shows, at the same time, signs of a return to his former rash experiments in language. The positive virtues of beauty and felicity in his diction had never been attended by the negative virtue of strict correctness. Thus, in the *Eve of St. Agnes* we had to "brook" tears for to check or forbear them; in *Hyperion*, "portion'd" for "proportion'd," eyes that "fever out," a chariot "foam'd along." Some of these verbal licences possess a force that makes them pass, but not so in *Lamia* the adjectives "psalterian" and "piaz-zian," the verb "to labyrinth," and the participle "daft," as if from an imaginary active verb meaning to daze.

In the moral which the tale is made to illustrate there is, moreover, a weakness. Keats himself gives us fair warning against attaching too much importance to any opinion which in a momentary mood we may find him uttering. But the doctrine he sets forth in *Lamia* is one which, from the reports of his conversation, we know him to have held with a certain consistency:

"Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy ?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven ;
We know her woof, her texture ; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an angel's wings,

Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air and gnomed mine—
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade."

Campbell has set forth the same doctrine more fully in *The Rainbow*; but one sounder, braver, and of better hope, by which Keats would have done well to stand, is preached by Wordsworth in his famous Preface.

Passing now from the narrative to the reflective portion of Keats's work during this period—it was on the odes, we saw, that he was chiefly occupied in the spring months of 1819, from the completion of *St. Agnes's Eve* at Chichester in January until the commencement of *Lamia* and *Otho the Great* at Shanklin in June. These odes of Keats constitute a class apart in English literature, in form and manner neither lineally derived from any earlier, nor much resembling any contemporary, verse. In what he calls the "roundelay" of the Indian maiden in *Endymion* he had made his most elaborate lyrical attempt until now; and while for once approaching Shelley in lyric ardour and height of pitch, had equalled Coleridge in touches of wild musical beauty and far-sought romance. His new odes are comparatively simple and regular in form. They are written in a strain intense, indeed, but meditative and brooding, and quite free from the declamatory and rhetorical elements which we are accustomed to associate with the idea of an ode. Of the five composed in the spring of 1819, two, those on *Psyche* and the *Grecian Urn*, are inspired by the old Greek world of imagination and art; two, those on *Melancholy* and the *Nightingale*, by moods of the poet's own mind; while the fifth, that on *Indolence*, partakes in a weaker degree of both inspirations.

In the *Psyche* (where the stanza is of a lengthened type

approaching those of Spenser's nuptial odes, but not regularly repeated) Keats recurs to a theme of which he had long been enamoured, as we know by the lines in the opening poem of his first book, beginning,

"So felt he, who first told how Psyche went
On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment."

Following these lines, in his early piece, came others disfigured by cloying touches of the kind too common in his love-scenes. Nor are like touches quite absent from the ode; but they are more than compensated by the exquisite freshness of the natural scenery where the mythic lovers are disclosed—"Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers fragrant-eyed." What other poet has compressed into a single line so much of the true life and charm of flowers, of their power to minister to the spirit of man through all his senses at once? Such felicity in compound epithets is by this time habitual with Keats; and of Spenser, with his "sea-shouldering whales," he is now in his own manner the equal. The "azure-lidded sleep" of the maiden in *St. Agnes's Eve* is matched in this ode by the "moss-lain Dryads" and the "soft-conchèd ear" of Psyche, though the last epithet perhaps jars on us a little with a sense of oddity, like the "cirque-couchant" snake in *Lamia*. For the rest there is certainly something strained in the turn of thought and expression whereby the poet offers himself and the homage of his own mind to the divinity he addresses in lieu of the worship of antiquity for which she came too late; and especially in the terms of the metaphor which opens the famous fourth stanza:

"Yes, I will be thy priest and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new-blown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind."

Yet over such difficulties the true lover of poetry will find himself swiftly borne, until he pauses breathless and delighted at the threshold of the sanctuary prepared by the "gardener Fancy," his ear charmed by the glow and music of the verse, with its hurrying pace and artfully iterated vowels towards the close, his mind enthralled by the beauty of the invocation and the imagery.

Less glowing, but of finer conception and more rare poetic value, is the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. Instead of the long and unequal stanza of the *Psyche*, it is written in a regular stanza of five rhymes, the first two arranged in a quatrain, and the second three in a sestet: a plan to which Keats adhered in the rest of his odes, only varying the order of the sestet, and in one instance—the ode to Melancholy—expanding it into a septet. The sight, or the imagination, of a piece of ancient sculpture had set the poet's mind at work, on the one hand conjuring up the scenes of ancient life and worship which lay behind and suggested the sculptured images; on the other, speculating on the abstract relations of plastic art to life. The opening invocation is followed by a string of questions which flash their own answer upon us out of the darkness of antiquity—interrogatories which are at the same time pictures—"What men or gods are these, what maidens loth," etc. The second and third stanzas express with perfect poetic felicity and insight the vital differences between life, which pays for its unique prerogative of reality by satiety and decay, and art, which in forfeiting reality gains in exchange permanence of beauty, and the power to charm by imagined experiences even richer than the real. Then the questioning begins again, and yields the incomparable choice of pictures—

"What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this quite morn?"

In the answering lines—

"And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return"—

in these lines there seems a dissonance, inasmuch as they speak of the arrest of life as though it were an infliction in the sphere of reality, and not merely, like the instances of such arrest given farther back, a necessary condition in the sphere of art, having in that sphere its own compensations. But it is a dissonance which the attentive reader can easily reconcile for himself; and none but an attentive reader will notice it. Finally, dropping the airy play of the mind backward and forward between the two spheres, the poet consigns the work of ancient skill to the future, to remain,

"in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
Beauty is truth, truth beauty;"

thus proclaiming in the last words what, amidst the gropings of reason and the flux of things, is to the poet and artist—at least to one of Keats's temper—an immutable law.

It seems clear that no single extant work of antiquity can have supplied Keats with the suggestion for this poem. There exists, indeed, at Holland House an urn wrought with just such a scene of pastoral sacrifice as is described in his fourth stanza:¹ and of course no subject

¹ This has been pointed out by my colleague, Mr. A. S. Murray (see Forman, *Works*, vol. iii., p. 115, *note*; and W. T. Arnold, *Poetical Works*, etc., p. xxii., *note*).

is commoner in Greek relief-sculpture than a Bacchanalian procession. But the two subjects do not, so far as I know, occur together on any single work of ancient art; and Keats probably imagined his urn by a combination of sculptures actually seen in the British Museum, with others known to him only from engravings, and particularly from Piranesi's etchings. Lord Holland's urn is duly figured in the *Vasi e Candelabri* of that admirable master. From the old Leigh Hunt days Keats had been fond of what he calls

"the pleasant flow
Of words at opening a portfolio;"

and in the scene of sacrifice in *Endymion* (Book I., 136-163) we may perhaps already find a proof of familiarity with this particular print, as well as an anticipation of the more masterly poetic rendering of the subject in the ode.

The ode *On Indolence* stands midway, not necessarily in date of composition, but in scope and feeling, between the two Greek and the two personal odes, as I have above distinguished them. In it Keats again calls up the image of a marble urn, but not for its own sake, only to illustrate the guise in which he feigns the allegoric presences of Love, Ambition, and Poetry to have appeared to him in a day-dream. This ode, less highly wrought and more unequal than the rest, contains the imaginative record of a passing mood (mentioned also in his correspondence) when the wonted intensity of his emotional life was suspended under the spell of an agreeable physical languor. Well had it been for him had such moods come more frequently to give him rest. Most sensitive among the sons of men, the sources of joy and pain lay close together in his nature, and unsatisfied passion kept both sources filled

to bursting. One of the attributes he assigns to his enchantress Lamia is a

“sciential brain

To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain.”

In the fragmentary ode *On Melancholy* (which has no proper beginning, its first stanza having been discarded) he treats the theme of Beaumont and of Milton in a manner entirely his own, expressing his experience of the habitual interchange and alternation of emotions of joy and pain with a characteristic easy magnificence of imagery and style:

“Aye, in the very Temple of Delight

Veil'd Melancholy has her sovereign shrine,

Though known to none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst joy's grape against his palate fine:

His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,

And be among her cloudy trophies hung.”

The same crossing and intermingling of opposite currents of feeling finds expression, together with unequalled touches of the poet's feeling for nature and romance, in the *Ode to a Nightingale*. Just as his Grecian urn was no single specimen of antiquity that he had seen, so it is not the particular nightingale he had heard singing in the Hampstead garden that he in his poem invokes, but a type of the race imagined as singing in some far-off scene of woodland mystery and beauty. Thither he sighs to follow her; first by aid of the spell of some southern vintage—a spell which he makes us realise in lines redolent of the southern richness and joy. Then follows a contrasted vision of all his own and mankind's tribulations, which he will leave behind him. Nay, he needs not the aid of Bacchus—Poetry alone shall transport him. For a moment

he mistrusts her power, but the next moment finds himself where he would be, listening to the imagined song in the imagined woodland, and divining in the darkness, by that gift whereby his mind is a match for nature, all the secrets of the season and the night. In this joy he remembers how often the thought of death has seemed welcome to him, and thinks it would be more welcome now than ever. The nightingale would not cease her song—and here, by a breach of logic which is also, I think, a flaw in the poetry, he contrasts the transitoriness of human life, meaning the life of the individual, with the permanence of the song-bird's life, meaning the life of the type. This last thought leads him off into the ages, whence he brings back those memorable touches of far-off Bible and legendary romance in the stanza closing with the words, "in faery lands forlorn;" and then, catching up his own last word, "forlorn," with an abrupt change of mood and meaning, he returns to daily consciousness, and with the fading away of his forest dream the poem closes. In this group of the odes it takes rank beside the *Grecian Urn* in the other. Neither is strictly faultless, but such revealing imaginative insight and such conquering poetic charm, the touch that in striking so lightly strikes so deep, who does not prefer to faultlessness? Both odes are among the veriest glories of our poetry. Both are at the same time too long and too well known to quote. Let us therefore place here, as an example of this class of Keats's work, the ode *To Autumn*, which is the last he wrote, and contains the record of his quiet September days at Winchester. It opens out, indeed, no such far-reaching avenues of thought and feeling as the two last mentioned, but in execution is perhaps the completest of them all. In the first stanza the bounty, in the last the pensiveness, of the time are expressed in words so

transparent and direct that we almost forget they are words at all, and nature herself and the season seem speaking to us; while in the middle stanza the touches of literary art and Greek personification have an exquisite congruity and lightness:

“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him now to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss’d cottage trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o’er-brimm’d their clammy cells.

“Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap’d furrow sound asleep,
Drows’d with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

“Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;

Hedge-cricket sing ; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft ;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies."

To pass from our poet's work at this time in the several fields of romance, epic, ballad, and ode, to those in the field of drama, is to pass from a region of happy and assured conquest to one of failure, though of failure not unredeemed by auguries of future success, had any future been in store for him. At his age no man has ever been a master in the drama ; even by the most powerful intuitive genius neither human nature nor the difficulties of the art itself can be so early mastered. The manner in which Keats wrote his first play, merely supplying the words to a plot contrived as they went along by a friend of gifts radically inferior to his own, was moreover the least favourable that he could have attempted. He brought to the task the mastery over poetic colour and diction which we have seen : he brought an impassioned sentiment of romance, and a mind prepared to enter by sympathy into the hearts of men and women ; while Brown contributed his amateur stage-craft, such as it was. But these things were not enough. The power of sympathetic insight had not yet developed in Keats into one of dramatic creation ; and the joint work of the friends is confused in order and sequence, and far from masterly in conception. Keats, indeed, makes the characters speak in lines flashing with all the hues of poetry. But in themselves they have the effect only of puppets inexpertly agitated : Otho, a puppet type of royal dignity and fatherly affection ; Ludolph, of febrile passion and vacillation ; Erminia, of maidenly purity ; Conrad and Auranthe, of ambitious lust and treachery. At least until the end of the fourth act these strictures hold good. From that point Keats worked alone,

and the fifth act, probably in consequence, shows a great improvement. There is a real dramatic effect, of the violent kind affected by the old English drama, in the disclosure of the body of Auranthe, dead indeed, at the moment when Ludolph in his madness vainly imagines himself to have slain her; and some of the speeches in which his frenzy breaks forth remind us strikingly of Marlowe, not only by their pomp of poetry and allusion, but by the tumult of the soul and senses expressed in them. Of the second historical play, *King Stephen*, which Keats began by himself at Winchester, too little was written to afford matter for a safe judgment. The few scenes he finished are not only marked by his characteristic splendour and felicity of phrase, they are full of a spirit of heady action and the stir of battle; qualities which he had not shown in any previous work, and for which we might have doubted his capacity had not this fragment been preserved.

But in the mingling of his soul's and body's destinies it had been determined that neither this nor any other of his powers should be suffered to ripen farther upon earth.

CHAPTER VIII.

Return to Wentworth Place.—Autumn occupations: *The Cap and Bells*; Recast of *Hyperion*.—Growing despondency.—Visit of George Keats to England.—Attack of illness in February.—Rally in the Spring.—Summer in Kentish Town.—Publication of the *Lamia* volume.—Relapse.—Ordered South.—Voyage to Italy, Naples, Rome.—Last Days and Death. [October, 1819—February, 1821.]

WE left Keats at Winchester, with *Otho*, *Lamia*, and the *Ode to Autumn* just written, and with his mind set on trying to face life sanely, and take up arms like other men against his troubles, instead of letting imagination magnify and passion exasperate them as heretofore. At his request Dilke took for him a lodging in his own neighbourhood in Westminster (25 College Street), and here Keats came on the 8th of October to take up his quarters. But alas! his blood proved traitor to his will, and the plan of life and literary work in London broke down at once on trial. The gain of health and composure which he thought he had made at Winchester proved illusory, or at least could only be maintained at a distance from the great perturbing cause. Two days after his return he went to Hampstead—"into the fire"—and in a moment the flames had seized him more fiercely than ever. It was the first time he had seen his mistress for four months. He found her kind, and from that hour was utterly passion's slave again.

In the solitude of his London lodging he found that he could not work nor rest nor fix his thoughts. He must send her a line, he writes to Fanny Brawne two days later, "and see if that will assist in dismissing you from my mind for ever so short a time. Upon my soul I can think of nothing else. . . . I cannot exist without you. I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again—my life seems to stop there—I see no further. You have absorb'd me." A three days' visit at her mother's house, followed by another of a day or two at the Dilkes', ended in his giving up all resistance to the spell. Within ten days, apparently, of his return from Winchester, he had settled again at Hampstead under Brown's roof, next door to the home of his joy and torment. He writes with a true foreboding: "I shall be able to do nothing. I should like to cast the die for Love or Death—I have no patience with anything else."

It was for death that the die was cast, and from the date of his return to Wentworth Place, in October, 1819, begins the melancholy closing chapter of Keats's history. Of the triple flame which was burning away his life, the flame of genius, of passion, and of disease, while the last kept smouldering in secret, the second burnt every day more fiercely, and the first began from this time forth to sink. Not that he was idle during the ensuing season of autumn and early winter; but the work he did was marked both by infirmity of purpose and failure of power. For the present he determined not to publish *Lamia*, *Isabella*, and the other poems written since *Endymion*. He preferred to await the result of Brown's attempt to get *Otho* brought on the stage, thinking, no doubt justly, that a success in that field would help to win a candid hearing for his poetry. In the meantime the scoffs of the party

critics had brought him so low in estimation that Brown in sending in the play thought it best to withhold his friend's name. The great hope of the authors was that Kean would see an opportunity for himself in the part of Ludolph. In this they were not disappointed; the play was accepted, but Elliston, the manager, proposing to keep it back till the next season, or the next but one, Keats and Brown objected to the delay, and about Christmas transferred the offer of their MS. to Covent Garden, where Macready, under Harris's management, was at this time beginning to act the leading parts. It was after a while returned unopened, and with that the whole matter seems to have dropped.

In the meanwhile tragedy was still the goal towards which Keats bent his hopes. "One of my ambitions," he had written to Bailey from Winchester, "is to make as great a revolution in modern dramatic writing as Kean has done in acting." And now, in a letter to Mr. Taylor of November 17th, he says that to write a few fine plays is still his greatest ambition, when he does feel ambitious, which is very seldom. The little dramatic skill he may as yet have, however badly it might show in a drama, would, he conceives, be sufficient for a poem; and what he wishes to do next is "to diffuse the colouring of *St. Agnes's Eve* throughout a poem in which character and sentiment would be the figures to such drapery." Two or three such poems would be, he thinks, the best *gradus* to the *Parnasum altissimum* of true dramatic writing. Meantime he is for the moment engaged on a task of a different nature. "As the marvellous is the most enticing, and the surest guarantee of harmonious numbers, I have been endeavouring to persuade myself to untether Fancy, and to let her manage for herself. I and myself cannot agree about this

at all." The piece to which Keats here alludes is evidently the satirical fairy poem of the *Cap and Bells*, on which we know him to have been at this time busy. Writing of the autumn days immediately following their return to Wentworth Place, Brown says :

"By chance our conversation turned on the idea of a comic faery poem in the Spenser stanza, and I was glad to encourage it. He had not composed many stanzas before he proceeded in it with spirit. It was to be published under the feigned authorship of "Lucy Vaughan Lloyd," and to bear the title of the *Cap and Bells*, or, which he preferred, the *Jealousies*. This occupied his mornings pleasantly. He wrote it with the greatest facility ; in one instance I remember having copied (for I copied as he wrote) as many as twelve stanzas before dinner."¹

Excellent friend as Brown was to Keats, he was not the most judicious adviser in matters of literature, and the attempt made in the *Cap and Bells* to mingle with the strain of fairy fancy a strain of worldly flippancy and satire was one essentially alien to Keats's nature. As long as health and spirits lasted, he was often full, as we have seen, of pleasantry and nonsense ; but his wit was essentially amiable,² and he was far too tender-hearted ever to be a satirist. Moreover, the spirit of poetry in him was too intense and serious to work hand-in-hand with the spirit of banter, as poetry and banter had gone hand-in-hand in some of the metrical romances of the Italian Renaissance, and again with unprecedented dexterity and brilliance in the early cantos of *Don Juan*. It was partly

¹ Houghton MSS.

² "He never spoke of any one," says Severn (Houghton MSS.), "but by saying something in their favour, and this always so agreeably and cleverly, imitating the manner to increase your favourable impression of the person he was speaking of."

the influence of the facetious Brown, who was a great student of Pulci and Boiardo, partly that of his own recent Italian studies, and partly the dazzling example of Byron's success, that now induced Keats to make an attempt in the same dual strain. Having already employed the measure most fit for such an attempt, the *ottava rima* of the Italians, in his serious poem of *Isabella*, he now, by what seems an odd technical perversity, adopted for his comic poem the grave Spenserian stanza, with its sustained and involved rhymes and its long-drawn close. Working thus in a vein not truly his own, and hampered moreover by his choice of metre, Keats nevertheless manages his transitions from grave to gay with a light hand, and the movement of the *Cap and Bells* has much of his characteristic suppleness and grace. In other respects the poem is not a success. The story, which appears to have been one of his own and Brown's invention, turned on the perverse loves of a fairy emperor and a fairy princess of the East. The two are unwillingly betrothed, each being meanwhile enamoured of a mortal. The eighty-eight stanzas, which were all that Keats wrote of the poem, only carry us as far as the flight of the emperor Elfinan for England, which takes place at the moment when his affianced bride alights from her aerial journey to his capital. Into the Elfinan part of the story Keats makes it clear that he meant somehow to weave in the same tale which had been in his mind when he began the fragment of *St. Mark's Eve* at the beginning of the year—the tale of an English Bertha living in a minster city, and beguiled in some way through the reading of a magic book. With this and other purely fanciful elements of the story are mixed up satirical allusions to the events of the day. It was in this year, 1819, that the quarrels between the Prince Regent and his wife

were drawing to a head; the public mind was full of the subject, and the general sympathy was vehemently aroused on the side of the scandalous lady in opposition to her thrice scandalous husband. The references to these royal quarrels and intrigues in the *Cap and Bells* are general rather than particular, although here and there individual names and characters are glanced at, as when "Esquire Biancopeny" stands manifestly, as Mr. Forman has pointed out, for Whitbread. But the social and personal satire of the piece is in truth aimless and weak enough. As Keats had not the heart, so neither had he the worldly experience, for this kind of work; and beside the blaze of the Byronic wit and devilry his raillery seems but child's play. Where the fun is of the purely fanciful and fairy kind, he shows abundance of adroitness and invention, and in passages not humourous is sometimes really himself, his imagination becoming vivid and alert, and his style taking on its own happy light and colour, but seldom for more than a stanza or half-stanza at a time.

Besides his morning task in Brown's company on the *Cap and Bells*, Keats had other work on hand during this November and December. "In the evenings," writes Brown, "at his own desire, he occupied a separate apartment, and was deeply engaged in re-modelling the fragment of *Hyperion* into the form of a Vision." The result of this attempt, which has been preserved, is of a singular and pathetic interest in Keats's history. We have seen how, in the previous August, he had grown discontented with the style and diction of *Hyperion*, as being too artificial and Miltonic. Now, in the decline of his powers, he took the poem up again,¹ and began to re-write and greatly amplify it; partly, it would seem, through a mere re-

¹ See Appendix, p. 226.

lapse into his old fault of overloading, partly through a desire to give expression to thoughts and feelings which were pressing on his mind. His new plan was to relate the fall of the Titans, not, as before, in direct narrative, but in the form of a vision revealed and interpreted to him by a goddess of the fallen race. The reader remembers how he had broken off his work on *Hyperion* at the point where Mnemosyne is enkindling the brain of Apollo with the inspiration of her ancient wisdom. Following a clue which he had found in a Latin book of mythology he had lately bought,¹ he now identifies this Greek Mnemosyne, the mother of the Muses, with the Roman Moneta, and (being possibly also aware that the temple of Juno Moneta on the Capitol at Rome was not far from that of Saturn) makes his Mnemosyne-Moneta the priestess and guardian of Saturn's temple. His vision takes him first into a grove or garden of delicious fruits, having eaten of which he sinks into a slumber, and awakes to find himself on the floor of a huge primeval temple. Presently a voice, the voice of Moneta, whose form he cannot yet see for the fumes of incense, summons him to climb the steps leading to an image beside which she is offering sacrifice. Obeying her with difficulty, he questions her concerning the mysteries of the place, and learns from her, among other knowledge, that he is standing in the temple of Saturn. Then she withdraws the veils from her face, at sight of which he feels an irresistible desire to learn her thoughts; and thereupon finds himself conveyed in a trance by her

¹ *Auctores Mythographi Latini*, ed. Van Staveren, Leyden, 1742. Keats's copy of the book was bought by him in 1819, and passed after his death into the hands first of Brown, and afterwards of Archdeacon Bailey (Houghton MSS.). The passage about Moneta which had wrought in Keats's mind occurs at p. 4, in the notes to Hyginus.

side to the ancient scene of Saturn's overthrow. "Deep in the shady sadness of a vale," etc.—from this point Keats begins to weave into the new tissue of his *Vision* the text of the original *Hyperion*, with alterations which are in almost all cases for the worse. Neither does the new portion of his work well match the old. Side by side with impressive passages, it contains others where both rhythm and diction flag, and in comparison depends for its beauty far more on single lines and passages, and less on sustained effects. Keats has indeed imagined nothing richer or purer than the feast of fruits at the opening of the *Vision*; and of supernatural presences he has perhaps conjured up none of such melancholy beauty and awe as that of the priestess when she removes her veils. But the especial interest of the poem lies in the light which it throws on the inward distresses of his mind, and on the conception he had by this time come to entertain of the poet's character and lot. When Moneta bids him mount the steps to her side, she warns him that if he fails to do so he is bound to perish utterly where he stands. In fact, he all but dies before he reaches the stair, but reviving, ascends and learns from her the meaning of the ordeal:

"None can usurp this height," returned that shade,
"But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest.
All else who find a haven in the world,
Where they may thoughtless sleep away their days,
If by a chance into this fane they come,
Rot on the pavement where thou rottedst half."
"Are there not thousands in the world," said I,
Encouraged by the sooth voice of the shade,
"Who love their fellows even to the death,
Who feel the giant agony of the world,
And more, like slaves to poor humanity,

Labour for mortal good? I sure should see
 Other men here, but I am here alone."
 "Those whom thou spakest of are no visionaries,"
 Rejoin'd that voice; "they are no dreamers weak;
 They seek no wonder but the human face,
 No music but a happy-noted voice:
 They come not here, they have no thought to come;
 And thou art here, for thou art less than they.
 What benefit canst thou do, or all thy tribe,
 To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing,
 A fever of thyself: think of the earth—
 What bliss, even in hope, is there for thee?
 What haven? Every creature hath its home,
 Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,
 Whether his labours be sublime or low—
 The pain alone, the joy alone, distinct:
 Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
 Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.
 Therefore, that happiness be somewhat shared,
 Such things as thou art are admitted oft
 Into like gardens thou didst pass erewhile,
 And suffer'd in these temples."¹

Tracing the process of Keats's thought through this somewhat obscure imagery—the poet, he means, is one who to indulge in dreams withdraws himself from the wholesome activities of ordinary men. At first he is lulled to sleep by the sweets of poetry (the fruits of the garden); awakening, he finds himself on the floor of a solemn temple, with Mnemosyne, the mother and inspirer of song, enthroned all but inaccessibly above him. If he is a trifle, indifferent to the troubles of his fellow men, he is condemned to perish swiftly and be forgotten; he is suffered to approach the goddess, to commune with her and catch

¹ Mrs. Owen was the first of Keats's critics to call attention to this passage, without, however, understanding the special significance it derives from the date of its composition.

her inspiration, only on condition that he shares all those troubles and makes them his own. And even then his portion is far harder and less honourable than that of common men. In the conception Keats here expresses of the human mission and responsibility of his art there is nothing new. Almost from the first dawning of his ambition he had looked beyond the mere sweets of poetry towards

"a nobler life;
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts."

What is new is the bitterness with which he speaks of the poet's lot even at its best:

"Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve."

Through what a circle must the spirit of Keats, when this bitter cry broke from him, have travelled since the days, only three years before, when he was never tired of singing by anticipation the joys and glories of the poetic life:

"These are the living pleasures of the bard,
But richer far posterity's award.
What shall he murmur with his latest breath,
When his proud eye looks through the film of death?"

His present cry in its bitterness is in truth a cry not so much of the spirit as of the flesh, or rather of the spirit vanquished by the flesh. The wasting of his vital powers by latent disease was turning all his sensations and emotions into pain—at once darkening the shadow of impending poverty, increasing the natural importunity of ill-boding instincts at his heart, and exasperating into agony the unsatisfied cravings of his passion. In verses at this time

addressed, though doubtless not shown, to his mistress, he exclaims once and again in tones like this :

“Where shall I learn to get my peace again?”

“O for some sunny spell
To dissipate the shadows of this hell;”

or at the conclusion of a piteous sonnet :

“Yourself—your soul—in pity give me all,
Withhold no atom’s atom or I die,
Or living on perhaps, your wretched thrall,
Forget, in the mist of idle misery,
Life’s purposes—the palate of the mind
Losing its gust, and my ambition blind.”

That he might win peace by marriage with the object of his passion does not seem to have occurred to Keats as possible in the present state of his fortunes. “However selfishly I may feel,” he had written to her some months earlier, “I am sure I could never act selfishly.” The Bawnes on their part were comfortably off, but what his instincts of honour and independence forbade him to ask, hers of tenderness could perhaps hardly be expected to offer. As the autumn wore into winter, Keats’s sufferings, disguise them as he might, could not escape the notice of his affectionate comrade Brown. Without understanding the cause, Brown was not slow to perceive the effect, and to realise how vain were the assurances Keats had given him at Winchester, that the pressure of real troubles would stiffen him against troubles of imagination, and that he was not and would not allow himself to be unhappy.

“I quickly perceived,” writes Brown, “that he was more so than I had feared; his abstraction, his occasional lassitude of mind, and, frequently, his assumed tranquillity of countenance gave me great un-

easiness. He was unwilling to speak on the subject; and I could do no more than attempt, indirectly, to cheer him with hope, avoiding that word however. . . . All that a friend could say, or offer, or urge was not enough to heal his many wounds. He listened, and in kindness, or soothed by kindness, showed tranquillity, but nothing from a friend could relieve him, except on a matter of inferior trouble. He was too thoughtful, or too unquiet, and he began to be reckless of health. Among other proofs of recklessness, he was secretly taking, at times, a few drops of laudanum to keep up his spirits. It was discovered by accident, and without delay revealed to me. He needed not to be warned of the danger of such a habit; but I rejoiced at his promise never to take another drop without my knowledge; for nothing could induce him to break his word when once given—which was a difficulty. Still, at the very moment of my being rejoiced, this was an additional proof of his rooted misery.”¹

Some of the same symptoms were observed by Haydon, and have been described by him with his usual reckless exaggeration, and love of contrasting another’s weakness with his own strength.² To his friends in general Keats bore himself as affectionately as ever, but they began to notice that he had lost his cheerfulness. One of them, Severn, at this time competed for and carried off (December 9, 1819) the annual gold medal of the Academy for a historical painting, which had not been adjudged for several years. The subject was Spenser’s “Cave of Despair.” We hear of Keats flinging out in anger from among a company of elder artists where the deserts of the winner were disparaged; and we find him making an appointment with Severn to go and see his prize picture—adding, however, parenthetically, from his troubled heart, “You had best put me into your Cave of Despair.” In December his letters to his sister make mention several times of ill health, and once of a suggestion which had

¹ Houghton MSS.

² See p. 191, note.

been made to him by Mr. Abbey, and which for a moment he was willing to entertain, that he should take advantage of an opening in the tea-broking line in connection with that gentleman's business. Early in January, 1820, George Keats appeared on a short visit to London. He was now settled with his wife and child in the far West, at Louisville, on the Ohio. Here his first trading adventure had failed, owing, as he believed, to the dishonesty of the naturalist Audubon, who was concerned in it, and he was brought to England by the necessity of getting possession from the reluctant Abbey of a further portion of the scanty funds still remaining to the brothers from their grandmother's gift. His visit lasted only three weeks, during which John made no attempt to unbosom himself to him as of old. "He was not the same being," wrote George, looking back on the time some years afterwards; "although his reception of me was as warm as heart could wish, he did not speak with his former openness and unreserve, he had lost the reviving custom of venting his griefs." In a letter which the poet wrote to his sister-in-law while her husband was in England, he attempts to keep up the old vein of lively affectionate fun and spirits, but soon falls involuntarily into one of depression and irritation against the world. Of his work he says nothing, and it is clear from Brown's narrative that both his morning and his evening task—the *Cap and Bells* and the *Vision*—had been dropped some time before this,¹ and left in the fragmentary state in which we possess them.

George left for Liverpool on Friday, January 28th. A few days later Keats was seized by the first overt attack of the fatal mischief which had been set up in his consti-

¹ "Interrupted," says Brown, oracularly, in Houghton MSS., "by a circumstance which it is needless to mention."

tution by the exertions of his Scotch tour, and which recent agitations, and perhaps imprudences, had aggravated.

"One night," writes Brown—it was on the Thursday, February 3d—"at eleven o'clock, he came into the house in a state that looked like fierce intoxication. Such a state in him, I knew, was impossible;¹ it therefore was the more fearful. I asked hurriedly, 'What is the matter? you are fevered.' 'Yes, yes,' he answered, 'I was on the outside of the stage this bitter day till I was severely chilled—but now I don't feel it. Fevered!—of course, a little.' He mildly and instantly yielded, a property in his nature towards any friend, to my request that he should go to bed. I followed with the best immediate remedy in my power. I entered his chamber as he leapt into bed. On entering the cold sheets, before his head was on the pillow, he slightly coughed, and I heard him say, 'That is blood from my mouth.' I went towards him; he was examining a single drop of blood upon the sheet. 'Bring me the candle, Brown, and let me see this blood.' After regarding it steadfastly, he looked up in my face with a calmness of countenance that I can never forget, and said, 'I know the colour of that blood—it is arterial blood—I cannot be deceived in that colour—that drop of blood is my death-warrant—I must die.' I ran for a surgeon; my friend was bled; and at five in the morning I left him after he had been some time in a quiet sleep."

Keats knew his case, and from the first moment had foreseen the issue truly. He survived for twelve months longer, but the remainder of his life was but a life-in-death. How many are there among us to whom such *lacrymae rerum* come not home? Happy, at least, are they whose lives this curse consumption has not darkened with sorrow unquenchable for losses past, with apprehensions never at rest for those to come—who know

¹ This passing phrase of Brown, who lived with Keats in the closest daily companionship, by itself sufficiently refutes certain statements of Haydon. But see Appendix, p. 228.

not what it is to watch, in some haven of delusive hope under Mediterranean palms, or amid the glittering winter peace of Alpine snows, their dearest and their brightest perish. The malady in Keats's case ran through the usual phases of deceptive rally and inevitable relapse. The doctors would not admit that his lungs were injured, and merely prescribed a lowering regimen and rest from mental excitement. The weakness and nervous prostration of the patient were at first excessive, and he could bear to see nobody but Brown, who nursed him affectionately day and night. After a week or so he was able to receive little daily visits from his betrothed, and to keep up a constant interchange of notes with her. A hint, which his good feelings wrung from him, that under the circumstances he ought to release her from her engagement, was not accepted, and for a time he became quieter and more composed. To his sister at Walthamstow he wrote often and cheerfully from his sick-bed, and pleasant letters to some of his men friends; among them one to James Rice, which contains this often quoted and touching picture of his state of mind :

"I may say that for six months before I was taken ill I had not passed a tranquil day. Either that gloom overspread me, or I was suffering under passionate feeling, or if I turned to versify some, that acerbated the poison of either sensation. The beauties of nature had lost their power over me. How astonishingly (here I must premise that illness, as far as I can judge in so short a time, has relieved my mind of a load of deceptive thoughts and images, and makes me perceive things in a truer light)—how astonishingly does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its natural beauties upon us! Like poor Falstaff, though I do not 'babble,' I think of green fields; I muse with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy—their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy."

The greatest pleasure he had experienced in life, Keats said at another time, was in watching the growth of flowers; and in a discussion on the literary merits of the Bible he once, says Hazlitt, found fault with the Hebrew poetry for saying so little about them. What he wants to see again, he writes now further from his sick-bed, are "the simple flowers of our spring." And in the course of April, after being nearly two months a prisoner, he began gradually to pick up strength and get about. Even as early as the 25th of March we hear of him going into London, to the private view of Haydon's "Entry into Jerusalem," where the painter tells how he found him and Hazlitt in a corner, "really rejoicing." Keats's friends, in whose minds his image had always been associated with the ideas of intense vitality and of fame in store, could not bring themselves to believe but that he would recover. Brown had arranged to start early in May on a second walking-tour in Scotland, and the doctor actually advised Keats to go with him; a folly on which he knew his own state too well to venture. He went with Brown on the smack as far as Gravesend, and then returned; not to Hampstead, but to a lodging in Wesleyan Place, Kentish Town. He had chosen this neighbourhood for the sake of the companionship of Leigh Hunt, who was living in Mortimer Street, close by. Keats remained at Wesleyan Place for about seven weeks during May and June, living an invalid life, and occasionally taking advantage of the weather to go to an exhibition in London or for a drive on Hampstead Heath. During the first weeks of his illness he had been strictly enjoined to avoid not only the excitement of writing, but even that of reading, poetry. About this time he speaks of intending to begin (meaning begin again) soon on the *Cap and Bells*. But in fact the

only work he really did was that of seeing through the press, with some slight revision of the text, the new volume of poems which his friends had at last induced him to put forward. This is the immortal volume containing *Lamia*, *Isabella*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *Hyperion*, and the *Odes*. Of the poems written during Keats's twenty months of inspiration, from March, 1818, to October, 1819, none of importance are omitted except *The Eve of St. Mark*, the *Ode on Indolence*, and *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. The first Keats no doubt thought too fragmentary, and the second too unequal; *La Belle Dame sans Merci* he had let Hunt have for his periodical, the *Indicator*, where it was printed (with alterations not for the better) on May 20, 1820. *Hyperion*, as the publishers mention in a note, was only at their special desire included in the book; it is given in its original shape, the poet's friends, says Brown, having made him feel that they thought the re-cast no improvement. The volume came out in the first week of July. An admirably kind and discreet review by Leigh Hunt appeared in the *Indicator* at the beginning of August;¹ and in the same month Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review*, for the first time broke silence in Keats's favour. The impression made on the more intelligent order of readers may be inferred from the remarks of Crabbe Robinson in his *Diaries* for the following December:² "My book has had good success among the literary people," wrote Keats a few

¹ A week or two later Leigh Hunt printed in the *Indicator* a few stanzas from the *Cap and Bells*, and about the same time dedicated to Keats his translation of Tasso's *Amyntas*, speaking of the original as "an early work of a celebrated poet whose fate it was to be equally pestered by the critical and admired by the poetical."

² See Crabbe Robinson, *Diaries*, vol. ii., p. 197, sqq.

weeks after its appearance, "and I believe has a moderate sale."

But had the success been even far greater than it was, Keats was in no heart and no health for it to cheer him. Passion with lack of hope were working havoc in his blood, and frustrating any efforts of nature towards recovery. The relapse was not long delayed. Fresh hæmorrhages occurring on the 22d and 23d of June, he moved from his lodgings in Wesleyan Place to be nursed by the Hunts at their house in Mortimer Street. Here everything was done that kindness could suggest to keep him amused and comforted, but all in vain; he "would keep his eyes fixed all day," as he afterwards avowed, on Hampstead; and once when at Hunt's suggestion they took a drive in that direction, and rested on a seat in Well Walk, he burst into a flood of unwonted tears, and declared his heart was breaking. In writing to Fanny Brawne he at times cannot disguise nor control his misery, but breaks into piteous outcries, the complaints of one who feels himself chained and desperate while mistress and friends are free, and whose heart is racked between desire and helplessness, and a thousand daily pangs of half-frantic jealousy and suspicion. "Hamlet's heart was full of such misery as mine is when he said to Ophelia, 'Go to a nunnery, go, go!'" Keats when he wrote thus was not himself, but only, in his own words, "a fever of himself;" and to seek cause for his complaints in anything but his own distempered state would be unjust equally to his friends and his betrothed. Wound as they might at the time, we know from her own words that they left no impression of unkindness on her memory.¹

¹ See Appendix, p. 228.

Such, at this time, was Keats's condition that the slightest shock unmanned him, and he could not bear the entrance of an unexpected person or stranger. After he had been some seven weeks with the Hunts, it happened on the 12th of August, through the misconduct of a servant, that a note from Fanny Brawne was delivered to him opened and two days late. This circumstance, we are told, so affected him that he could not endure to stay longer in the house, but left it instantly, intending to go back to his old lodgings in Well Walk. The Brawnes, however, would not suffer this, but took him into their own home and nursed him. Under the eye and tendance of his betrothed he found, during the next few weeks, some mitigation of his sufferings. Haydon came one day to see him, and has told with a painter's touch how he found him "lying in a white bed, with white quilt and white sheets; the only colour visible was the hectic flush of his cheeks. He was deeply affected, and so was I."¹ Ever since his relapse at the end of June, Keats had been warned by the doctors that a winter in England would be too much for him, and had been trying to bring himself to face the prospect of a journey to Italy. The Shelleys had heard through the Gisbornes of Keats's relapse, and Shelley now wrote in terms of the most delicate and sympathetic kindness inviting him to come and take up his residence with them at Pisa. This letter reached Keats immediately after his return to Hampstead. He replied in an uncertain tone, showing himself deeply touched by the Shelleys' friendship; but as to the *Cenci*, which had just been sent him, and generally as to Shelley's and his own work in

¹ Houghton MSS. In both the *Autobiography* and the *Correspondence* the passage is amplified with painful and probably not trustworthy additions.

poetry, finding nothing very cordial or much to the purpose to say.

As to the plan of wintering in Italy, Keats had by this time made up his mind to try it, "as a soldier marches up to a battery." His hope was that Brown would accompany him, but the letters he had written to that friend in the Highlands were delayed in delivery, and the time for Keats's departure was fast approaching, while Brown still remained in ignorance of his purpose. In the meantime another companion offered himself in the person of Severn, who having won, as we have seen, the gold medal of the Royal Academy the year before, determined now to go and work at Rome with a view to competing for the travelling studentship. Keats and Severn accordingly took passage for Naples on board the ship *Maria Crowther* which sailed from London on Sept. 18th.¹ Several of the friends who loved Keats best went on board with him as far as Gravesend, and among them Mr. Taylor, who had just helped him with money for his journey by the purchase for £100 of the copyright of *Endymion*. As soon as the ill news of his health reached Brown in Scotland, he hastened to make the best of his way south, and for that purpose caught a smack at Dundee, which arrived in the Thames on the same evening as the *Maria Crowther* sailed; so that the two friends lay on that night within hail of each other off Gravesend unawares.

The voyage at first seemed to do Keats good, and Severn

¹ I have the date of sailing from Lloyd's, through the kindness of the secretary, Col. Hozier. For the particulars of the voyage and the time following it, I have drawn in almost equal degrees from the materials published by Lord Houghton, by Mr. Forman, by Severn himself in *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. xi., p. 401, and from the unpublished Houghton and Severn MSS.

was struck by his vigour of appetite and apparent cheerfulness. The fever of travel and change is apt to produce this deceptive effect in a consumptive patient, and in Keats's case, aided by his invincible spirit of pleasantness to those about him, it was sufficient to disguise his sufferings, and to raise the hopes of his companion throughout the voyage and for some time afterwards. Contrary winds held them beating about the Channel, and ten days after starting they had got no farther than Portsmouth, where Keats landed for a day, and paid a visit to his friends at Bedhampton. On board ship in the Solent immediately afterwards he wrote to Brown a letter confiding to him the secret of his torments more fully than he had ever confided it face to face. Even if his body would recover of itself, his passion, he says, would prevent it: "The very thing which I want to live most for will be a great occasion of my death. I cannot help it. Who can help it? Were I in health it would make me ill, and how can I bear it in my state? I wish for death every day and night to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even these pains, which are better than nothing. Land and sea, weakness and decline, are great separators, but Death is the great divorcer for ever."

On the night when Keats wrote these words (Sept. 28th) Brown was staying with the Dilkes at Chichester, so that the two friends had thus narrowly missed seeing each other once more. The ship putting to sea again, still with adverse winds, there came next to Keats that day of momentary calm and lightening of the spirit of which Severn has left us the record, and the poet himself a testimony in the last, and one of the most beautiful, of his sonnets. They landed on the Dorsetshire coast, apparently near

Lulworth, and spent a day exploring its rocks and caves, the beauties of which Keats showed and interpreted with the delighted insight of one initiated from birth into the secrets of nature. On board ship the same night he wrote the sonnet which every reader of English knows so well, placing it, by a pathetic choice or chance, opposite the heading a *Lover's Complaint*, on a blank leaf of the folio copy of Shakspeare's poems which had been given him by Reynolds, and which in marks, notes, and under-scorings bears so many other interesting traces of his thought and feeling :

"Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art,
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of cold ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death."

These were Keats's last verses. With the single exception of the sonnet beginning "The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone," composed probably immediately after his return from Winchester, they are the only love-verses in which his passion is attuned to tranquillity ; and surely no death-song of lover or poet came ever in a strain of more unfevered beauty and tenderness, or with images of such a refreshing and solemn purity.

Getting clear of the Channel at last, the vessel was caught by a violent storm in the Bay of Biscay ; and Severn waking at night, and finding the water rushing through their cabin, called out to Keats, " half fearing he might be dead," and to his relief was answered cheerfully with the first line of Arne's long-popular song from *Artaxerxes*—" Water parted from the sea." As the storm abated Keats began to read the shipwreck canto of *Don Juan*, but found its reckless and cynic brilliancy intolerable, and presently flung the volume from him in disgust. A dead calm followed ; after which the voyage proceeded without farther incident, except the dropping of a shot across the ship's bow by a Portuguese man-of-war, in order to bring her to and ask a question about privateers. After a voyage of over four weeks the *Maria Crowther* arrived in the Bay of Naples, and was there subjected to ten days' quarantine, during which, says Keats, he summoned up, " in a kind of desperation," more puns than in the whole course of his life before. A Miss Cotterill, consumptive like himself, was among his fellow-passengers, and to her Keats showed himself full of cheerful kindness from first to last, the sight of her sufferings inwardly preying all the while on his nerves, and contributing to aggravate his own. He admits as much in writing from Naples harbour to Mrs. Brawne ; and in the same letter says, " O what an account I could give you of the Bay of Naples if I could once more feel myself a Citizen of this world—I feel a spirit in my Brain would lay it forth pleasantly." The effort he constantly made to keep bright, and to show an interest in the new world of colour and classic beauty about him, partly imposed on Severn ; but in a letter he wrote to Brown from Naples on Nov. 1st, soon after their landing, his secret anguish of sense and spirit breaks out terribly :

"I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. . . . Oh God! God! God! Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head. My imagination is horribly vivid about her—I see her—I hear her. . . . Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of so much misery."

At Naples Keats and Severn staid at the Hotel d'Angleterre, and received much kindness and hospitality from a brother of Miss Cotterill's who was there to meet her. The political state and servile temper of the people—though they were living just then under the constitutional forms imposed on the Bourbon monarchy by the revolution of the previous summer—grated on Keats's liberal instincts, and it was the sight in the theatre of sentries actually posted on the stage during a performance that one evening determined him suddenly to leave the place. He had received there another letter from Shelley, who since he last wrote had read the *Lamia* volume, and was full of generous admiration for *Hyperion*. Shelley now warmly renewed his invitation to Keats to come to Pisa. But his and Severn's plans were fixed for Rome. On their drive thither (apparently in the second week of November) Keats suffered seriously from want of proper food; but he was able to take pleasure in the beauty of the land, and of the autumn flowers which Severn gathered for him by the way. Reaching Rome, they settled at once in lodgings which Mr. (afterwards Sir James) Clark had taken for them in the Piazza di Spagna, in the first house on the right going up the steps to Sta. Trinità dei Monti. Here, according to the manner of those days in Italy, they were left pretty much to shift for themselves. Neither could speak Italian, and at first they were ill served by the *trattoria* from which they got their meals, until Keats mended matters

by one day coolly emptying all the dishes out of window, and handing them back to the messenger—a hint, says Severn, which was quickly taken. One of Severn's first cares was to get a piano, since nothing soothed Keats's pain so much as music. For a while the patient seemed better. Dr. Clark wished him to avoid the excitement of seeing the famous monuments of the city, so he left Severn to visit these alone, and contented himself with quiet strolls, chiefly on the Pincian close by. The season was fine, and the freshness and brightness of the air, says Severn, invariably made him pleasant and witty. In Severn's absence Keats had a companion he liked in an invalid, Lieutenant Elton. In their walks on the Pincian these two often met the famous beauty Pauline Bonaparte, Princess Borghese. Her charms were by this time failing—but not for lack of exercise; and her melting glances at his companion, who was tall and handsome, presently affected Keats's nerves, and made them change the direction of their walks. Sometimes, instead of walking, they would ride a little way on horseback while Severn was working among the ruins.

It is related by Severn that Keats in his first days at Rome began reading a volume of Alfieri, but dropped it at the words, too sadly applicable to himself,

“Misera me! sollievo a me non resta
Altro che 'l pianto, *ed il pianto è delitto.*”

Notwithstanding signs like this, his mood was on the whole more cheerful. His thoughts even turned again towards verse, and he meditated a poem on the subject of Sabrina. Severn began to believe he would get well, and wrote encouragingly to his friends in England; and on November 30th Keats himself wrote to Brown in a strain much less

despondent than before. But suddenly on these glimmerings of hope followed despair. On December 10th came a relapse which left no doubt of the issue. Hæmorrhage followed hæmorrhage on successive days, and then came a period of violent fever, with scenes the most piteous and distressing. Keats at starting had confided to his friend a bottle of laudanum, and now with agonies of entreaty begged to have it, in order that he might put an end to his misery; and on Severn's refusal, "his tender appeal turned to despair, with all the power of his ardent imagination and bursting heart." It was no unmanly fear of pain in Keats, Severn again and again insists, that prompted this appeal, but above all his acute sympathetic sense of the trials which the sequel would bring upon his friend. "He explained to me the exact procedure of his gradual dissolution, enumerated my deprivations and toils, and dwelt upon the danger to my life, and certainly to my fortune, of my continued attendance on him." Severn gently persisting in refusal, Keats for a while fiercely refused his friend's ministrations, until presently the example of that friend's patience and his own better mind made him ashamed. In religion Keats had been neither a believer nor a scoffer, respecting Christianity without calling himself a Christian, and by turns clinging to and drifting from the doctrine of immortality. Contrasting now the behaviour of the believer Severn with his own, he acknowledged anew the power of the Christian teaching and example, and bidding Severn read to him from Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, strove to pass the remainder of his days in a temper of more peace and constancy.

By degrees the tumult of his soul abated. His sufferings were very great, partly from the nature of the disease itself, partly from the effect of the disastrous lowering and

starving treatment at that day employed to combat it. Shunned and neglected as the sick and their companions then were in Italy, the friends had no succour except from the assiduous kindness of Dr. and Mrs. Clark, with occasional aid from a stranger, Mr. Ewing. At one moment, their stock of money having run out, they were in danger of actual destitution, till a remittance from Mr. Taylor arrived just in time to save them. The devotion and resource of Severn were infinite, and had their reward. Occasionally there came times of delirium or half-delirium, when the dying man would rave wildly of his miseries and his ruined hopes, till his companion was almost exhausted with "beating about in the tempest of his mind;" and once and again some fresh remembrance of his love, or the sight of her handwriting in a letter, would pierce him with too intolerable a pang. But generally, after the first few weeks, he lay quiet, with his hand clasped on a white cornelian, one of the little tokens she had given him at starting, while his companion soothed him with reading or music. His favourite reading was still Jeremy Taylor, and the sonatas of Haydn were the music he liked Severn best to play to him. Of recovery he would not hear, but longed for nothing except the peace of death, and had even weaned, or all but weaned, himself from thoughts of fame. "I feel," he said, "the flowers growing over me;" and it seems to have been gently and without bitterness that he gave the words for his epitaph: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." Ever since his first attack at Wentworth Place he had been used to speak of himself as living a posthumous life, and now his habitual question to the doctor when he came in was, "Doctor, when will this posthumous life of mine come to an end?" As he turned to ask it neither physician nor friend could bear the pa-

thetic expression of his eyes, at all times of extraordinary power, and now burning with a sad and piercing unëarthly brightness in his wasted cheeks. Loveable and considerate to the last, "his generous concern for me," says Severn, "in my isolated position at Rome, was one of his greatest cares." His response to kindness was irresistibly winning, and the spirit of poetry and pleasantness was with him to the end. Severn tells how in watching Keats he used sometimes to fall asleep, and awakening, find they were in the dark. "To remedy this, one night I tried the experiment of fixing a thread from the bottom of a lighted candle to the wick of an unlighted one, that the flame might be conducted, all which I did without telling Keats. When he awoke and found the first candle nearly out, he was reluctant to wake me, and while doubting suddenly cried out, "Severn, Severn, here's a little fairy lamplighter actually lit up the other candle.'" And again, "Poor Keats has me ever by him, and shadows out the form of one solitary friend; he opens his eyes in great doubt and horror, but when they fall on me they close gently, open quietly and close again, till he sinks to sleep."

Such tender and harrowing memories haunted all the after life of the watcher, and in days long subsequent it was one of his chief occupations to write them down. Life held out for two months and a half after the relapse, but from the first days of February the end was visibly drawing near. It came peacefully at last. On the 23d of that month, writes Severn, "about four, the approaches of death came on. 'Severn—I—lift me up—I am dying—I shall die easy; don't be frightened—be firm, and thank God it has come.' I lifted him up in my arms. The phlegm seemed boiling in his throat, and increased until eleven, when he gradually sank into death, so quiet that I

still thought he slept." Three days later his body was carried, attended by several of the English in Rome who had heard his story, to its grave in that retired and verdant cemetery which for his sake and Shelley's has become a place of pilgrimage to the English race for ever. It was but the other day that the remains of Severn were laid in their last resting-place beside his friend.¹

¹ Severn, as most readers will remember, died at Rome in 1879, and his remains were, in 1882, removed from their original burying-place to a grave beside those of Keats in the Protestant cemetery near the pyramid of Caius Sestius.

CHAPTER IX.

Character and Genius.

THE touching circumstances of Keats's illness and death at Rome aroused, naturally, as soon as they were known, the sympathy of every generous mind. Foremost, as all the world knows, in the expression of that sympathy was Shelley. He had been misinformed as to the degree in which the critics had contributed to Keats's sufferings, and believing that they had killed him, was full both of righteous wrath against the offenders and of passionate regret for what the world had lost. Under the stress of that double inspiration Shelley wrote—

“And a whirlwind of music came sweet from the spheres.”

As an utterance of abstract pity and indignation, *Adonais* is unsurpassed in literature; with its hurrying train of beautiful spectral images, and the irresistible current and thrilling modulation of its verse, it is perhaps the most perfect and sympathetic effort of Shelley's art; while its strain of transcendental consolation for mortal loss contains the most lucid exposition of his philosophy. But of Keats as he actually lived the elegy presents no feature, while the general impression it conveys of his character and fate is erroneous. A similar false impression was at the same time conveyed to a circle of readers immeasurably wider than that reached by Shelley in the well-

known stanza of *Don Juan*. In regard to Keats, Byron tried both to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare. When the *Edinburgh* praised him he was furious, and on receipt of the *Lamia* volume wrote with vulgar savagery to Murray: "No more Keats, I entreat—flay him alive; if some of you don't, I must skin him myself." Then after his death, hearing that it had been caused by the critics, he turns against the latter, and cries: "I would not be the person who wrote that homicidal article for all the honour and glory of the world." In the *Don Juan* passage he contrived to have his fling at the reviewers, and at the weakness, as he imagined it, of their victim in the same breath.

Taken together with the notion of "Johnny Keats" to which *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly* had previously given currency, the *Adonais* and the *Don Juan* passage alike tended to fix in the public mind an impression of Keats's character as that of a weakling to whom the breath of detraction had been poison. It was long before his friends, who knew that he was "as like Johnny Keats as the Holy Ghost," did anything effectual to set his memory right. Brown had been bent on doing so from the first, but in the end wrote only the brief memoir, still in manuscript, which has been quoted so often in the above pages. For anything like a full biography, George Keats in America could alone have supplied the information; but against him, since he had failed to send help to his poet-brother in the hour of need (having been in truth simply unable to do so), Brown had unluckily conceived so harsh a prejudice that friendly communication between them became impossible. Neither was Dilke, who alone among Keats's friends in England took George's part, disposed, under the circumstances, to help Brown in his task. For a long time

George himself hoped to superintend and supply materials for a life of his brother, but partly his want of literary experience, and partly the difficulty of leaving his occupations in the West, prevented him. Mr. Taylor, the publisher, also at one time wished to be Keats's biographer, and with the help of Woodhouse collected materials for the purpose, but in the end failed to use them. The same wish was entertained by John Hamilton Reynolds, whose literary skill and fine judgment and delicacy should have made him, of all the poet's friends, the most competent for the work. But of these many projects not one had been carried out when, five-and-twenty years after Keats's death, a younger man, who had never seen him, took up the task—the Monckton Milnes of those days, the Lord Houghton freshly remembered by us all—and with help from nearly all Keats's surviving friends, and by the grace of his own genial and sympathetic temper, set the memory of the poet in its true light in the beautiful and moving book with which every student is familiar.

Keats had, indeed, enemies within his house, apart (if the separation can with truth be made) from the secret presence of that worst enemy of all, inherited disease, which killed him. He had a nature all tingling with pride and sensitiveness; he had the perilous capacity and appetite for pleasure to which he owns when he speaks of his own "exquisite sense of the luxurious;" and with it the besetting tendency to self-torment which he describes as his "horrid morbidity of temperament." The greater his credit that on the one hand he gave way so little to self-indulgence, and that, on the other, he battled so bravely with the spirits that plagued him. To the bridle thus put on himself he alludes in his unaffected way when he speaks of the "violence of his temperament, continually smoth-

ered up." Left fatherless at eight, motherless at fifteen, and subject, during the forming years of his life which followed, to no other discipline but that of apprenticeship in a suburban surgery, he showed in his life such generosity, modesty, humour, and self-knowledge, such a spirit of conduct and degree of self-control, as would have done honour to one infinitely better trained and less hardly tried. His hold over himself gave way, indeed, under the stress of passion, and as a lover he betrays all the weak places of his nature. But we must remember his state of health when the passion seized, and the worse state into which it quickly threw him, as well as the lack there was in her who caused it—not, indeed, so far as we can judge, of kindness and loyalty, but certainly, it would seem, of the woman's finer genius of tact and tenderness. Under another kind of trial, when the work he offered to the world, in all soberness of self-judgment and of hope, was thrust back upon him with gibes and insult, he bore himself with true dignity; and if the practical consequences preyed upon his mind, it was not more than reason and the state of his fortunes justified.

In all ordinary relations of life his character was conspicuous alike for manly spirit and sweetness. No man who ever lived has inspired in his friends a deeper or more devoted affection. One, of whose name we have heard little in this history,¹ wrote while the poet lay dying: "Keats must get himself again, Severn, if but for me—I cannot afford to lose him; if I know what it is to love, I truly love John Keats." The following is from a letter of Brown, written also during his illness: "He is present to me everywhere and at all times—he now seems sitting here at my side, and looking hard into my face. . . .

¹ Haslam, in Severn MSS.

So much as I have loved him, I never knew how closely he was wound about my heart.”¹ Elsewhere, speaking of the time of his first attack, Brown says: “While I waited on him, his instinctive generosity, his acceptance of my offices, by a glance of his eye or motion of his hand, made me regard my mechanical duty as absolutely nothing compared to his silent acknowledgment. Something like this Severn, his last nurse, observed to me;”² and we know in fact how the whole life of Severn, prolonged nearly sixty years after his friend’s death, was coloured by the light reflected from his memory. When Lord Houghton’s book came out, in 1848, Archdeacon Bailey wrote from Ceylon to thank the writer for doing merited honour to one “whose genius I did not, and do not, more fully admire than I entirely loved the *Man*.”³ The points on which all who knew him especially dwell are two: First, his high good sense and spirit of honour; as to which let one witness stand for many. “He had a soul of noble integrity,” says Bailey, “and his common sense was a conspicuous part of his character. Indeed his character was, in the best sense, manly.” Next, his beautiful unselfishness and warmth of sympathy. This is the rarest quality of genius, which from the very intensity of its own life and occupations is apt to be self-absorbed, requiring the devotion it receives with charm, which costs it nothing—but with charm only—and when the trial comes, refusing to friendship any real sacrifice of its own objects or inclinations. But when genius to charm adds true unselfishness, and is ready to throw all the ardour of its own life into the cares and interests of those about it, then we have what in human nature is most worthy of love. And this is what his

¹ Severn MSS.² Houghton MSS.³ *Ibid.*

companions found in Keats. "He was the sincerest friend," cries Reynolds, "the most lovable associate—the deepest listener to the griefs and distresses of all around him—'that ever lived in this tide of times.'"¹ To the same effect Haydon: "He was the most unselfish of human creatures; unadapted to this world, he cared not for himself, and put himself to any inconvenience for the sake of his friends. . . . He had a kind, gentle heart, and would have shared his fortune with any one who wanted it." And again Bailey:

"With his friends, a sweeter tempered man I never knew than was John Keats. Gentleness was indeed his proper characteristic, without one particle of dullness, or insipidity, or want of spirit. . . . In his letters he talks of *suspecting* everybody. It appeared not in his conversation. On the contrary, he was uniformly the apologist for poor frail human nature, and allowed for people's faults more than any man I ever knew, and especially for the faults of his friends. But if any act of wrong or oppression, of fraud or falsehood, was the topic, he rose into sudden and animated indignation."²

Lastly, "He had no fears of self," says George Keats; "through interference in the quarrels of others, he would at all hazards, and without calculating his powers to defend, or his reward for the deed, defend the oppressed and distressed with heart and soul, with hand and purse."

In this chorus of admiring affection Haydon alone must assert his own superiority by mixing depreciation with praise. When he laments over Keats's dissipations he exaggerates, there is evidence enough to show, idly and calumniously. When, on the other hand, he speaks of the poet's "want of decision of character and power of will," and says that "never for two days did he know his own

¹ Houghton MSS.

² *Ibid.*

intentions," his criticism is deserving of more attention. This is only Haydon's way of describing a fact in Keats's nature of which no one was better aware than himself. He acknowledges his own "unsteady and vagarish disposition." What he means is no weakness of instinct or principle affecting the springs of conduct in regard to others, but a liability to veerings of opinion and purpose in regard to himself. "The Celtic instability" a reader may perhaps surmise who adopts that hypothesis as to the poet's descent. Whether the quality was one of race or not, it was probably inseparable from the peculiar complexion of Keats's genius. Or rather it was an expression in character of that which was the very essence of that genius, the predominance, namely, of the sympathetic imagination over every other faculty. Acute as was his own emotional life, he nevertheless belonged essentially to the order of poets whose work is inspired, not mainly by their own personality, but by the world of things and men outside them. He realised clearly the nature of his own gift, and the degree to which susceptibility to external impressions was apt to overpower in him—not practical consistency only, but even the sense of a personal identity.

"As to the poetic character itself," he writes, "(I mean that sort of which, if I am anything, I am a member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian, or egotistical sublime; which is a thing *per se*, and stands alone), it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—it has no character—it enjoys light and shade—it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—it has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no identity; he is continually in for, and filling, some other body. . . . If, then, he has no self, and if I am a poet, where is the wonder that I should say I would write no more? Might I not at that very instant have been cogitating on the characters of Saturn and Ops? It

is a wretched thing to confess, but it is a very fact, that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature."

"Even now," he says, on another occasion, "I am perhaps not speaking from myself, but from some character in whose soul I now live." Keats was often impatient of this Protean quality of his own mind. "I would call the head and top of those who have a proper self," he says, "men of power;" and it is the men of power, the men of trenchant individuality and settled aims, that in the sphere of practical life he most admires. But in the sphere of thought and imagination his preference is dictated by the instinctive bent of his own genius. In that sphere he is impatient, in turn, of all intellectual narrowness, and will not allow that poetry should make itself the exponent of any single creed or given philosophy. Thus, in speaking of what he thinks too doctrinal and pedagogic in the work of Wordsworth—

"For the sake," he asks, "of a few fine imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain philosophy engendered in the whims of an egotist? Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage and deceives himself. Many a man can travel to the very bourne of Heaven, and yet want confidence to put down his half-seeing. . . . We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us, and, if we do not agree, seems to put its hand into its breeches pocket. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive—a thing which enters into one's soul."

This is but one of many passages in which Keats proclaims the necessity, for a poet, of an all-embracing receptivity and openness of mind. His critics sometimes speak as if his aim had been merely to create a paradise of art and beauty remote from the cares and interests of the

world. If the foregoing pages have been written to any purpose, the reader will be aware that no criticism can be more mistaken. At the creation, the revelation, of beauty Keats aimed indeed invariably, but of beauty, wherever its elements existed—"I have loved," as he says, "the principle of beauty in all things." His conception of the kingdom of poetry was Shakspearean, including the whole range of life and imagination, every affection of the soul and every speculation of the mind. Of that kingdom he lived long enough to enter on and possess certain provinces only—those that, by their manifest and prevailing charm, first and most naturally allure the spirit of youth. Would he have been able to make the rest also his own? Would the faculties that were so swift to reveal the hidden delights of nature, to divine the true spirit of antiquity, to conjure with the spell of the Middle Age—would they with time have gained equal power to unlock the mysteries of the heart, and still, in obedience to the law of beauty, to illuminate and harmonise the great struggles and problems of human life?

My belief is that such power they would not have failed to gain. From the height to which the genius of Keats arose during the brief period between its first effervescence and its exhaustion—from the glowing humanity of his own nature, and the completeness with which, by the testimony alike of his own consciousness and his friends' experience, he was accustomed to live in the lives of others—from the gleams of true greatness of mind which shine not only in his poetry, but equally amid the gossip and pleasantries of his familiar letters—from all our evidences, in a word, as to what he was as well as from what he did—I think it probable that by power, as well as by temperament and aim, he was the most Shakspearean spirit that has lived

since Shakspeare; the true Marcellus, as his first biographer has called him, of the realm of English song; and that in his premature death our literature has sustained its greatest loss. Something like this, it would seem, is also the opinion of his foremost now living successors—as Lord Tennyson, Mr. Browning, Mr. Matthew Arnold. Others have formed a different judgment, but among those unfortunate guests at the banquet of life—the poets called away before their time—who can really adjudge the honours that would have been due had they remained? In a final estimate of any writer's work we must take into account not what he might have done, but only what he did. And in the work actually left by Keats, the master-chord of humanity, we shall admit, had not yet been struck with fulness. When we sum up in our minds the total effect of his poetry we can think, indeed, of the pathos of *Isabella*, but of that alone, as equally powerful in its kind with the nature-magic of the *Hymn to Pan* and the *Ode to a Nightingale*, with the glow of romance colour in *St. Agnes's Eve*, the weirdness of romance sentiment in *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, the conflict of elemental force with fate in *Hyperion*, the revelations of the soul of ancient life and art in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, and the fragment of an *Ode to Maia*.

It remains to glance at the influence exercised by Keats on the poets who have come after him. In two ways, chiefly, I should say, has that influence been operative. First, on the subject-matter of poetry: in kindling and informing in other souls the poetic love of nature for her own sake, and also, in equal degrees, the love both of classic fable and of romance. And secondly, on its form: in setting before poets a certain standard of execution—a standard not of technical correctness, for which Keats nev-

er cared sufficiently, but of that quality to which he himself refers when he speaks of "loading every rift of a subject with ore." We may define it as the endeavour after a continual positive poetic richness and felicity of phrase. A typical instance is to be found in the lines already quoted that tell us of the trembling hopes of Madeline—

"But to her heart her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side."

The beauty of such a phrase is no mere beauty of fancy or of sound; it is the beauty which resides in truth only, every word being chosen and every touch laid by a vital exercise of the imagination. The first line describes in perfection the duality of consciousness in such a moment of suspense, the second makes us realise at once the physical effect of the emotion on the heroine, and the spell of her imagined presence on ourselves. In so far as Keats has taught other poets really to write like this, his influence has been wholly to their advantage—but not so when for this quality they give us only its simulacrum, in the shape of brilliancies merely verbal and a glitter not of gold. The first considerable writer among Keats's successors on whom his example took effect was Hood, in the fairy and romance poems of his earlier time. The dominant poet of the Victorian age, Tennyson, has been profoundly influenced by it both in the form and the matter of his art, and is indeed the heir of Keats and of Wordsworth in almost equal degrees. After or together with Coleridge, Keats has also contributed most, among English writers, to the poetic method and ideals of Rossetti and his group. Himself, as we have seen, alike by gifts and training a true child of the Elizabethans, he thus stands in the most direct line of descent between the great poets of that age

and those, whom posterity has yet to estimate, of our own day.

Such, I think, is Keats's historic place in English literature. What his place was in the hearts of those who best knew him, we have just learned from their own lips. The days of the years of his life were few and evil, but above his grave the double aureole of poetry and friendship shines immortally.

APPENDIX.

Page 2, note 1.—As to the exact date of Keats's birth the evidence is conflicting. He was christened at St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, Dec. 18, 1795, and on the margin of the entry in the baptismal register (which I am informed is in the handwriting of the rector, Dr. Conybeare) is a note stating that he was born Oct. 31st. The date is given accordingly without question by Mr. Buxton Forman (*Works*, vol. i., p. xlviii). But it seems certain that Keats himself and his family believed his birthday to have been Oct. 29th. Writing on that day in 1818, Keats says, "this is my birthday." Brown (in Houghton MSS.) gives the same day, but only as on hearsay from a lady to whom Keats had mentioned it, and with a mistake as to the year. Lastly, in the proceedings in *Rawlings v. Jennings*, Oct. 29th is again given as his birthday, in the affidavit of one Anne Birch, who swears that she knew his father and mother intimately. The entry in the St. Botolph's register is probably the authority to be preferred.—Lower Moorfields was the space now occupied by Finsbury Circus and the London Institution, together with the east side of Finsbury Pavement.—The births of the younger brothers are in my text given rightly for the first time, from the parish registers of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, where they were all three christened in a batch on Sept. 24, 1801. The family were at that date living in Craven Street.

P. 2, note 2.—Brown (Houghton MSS.) says simply that Thomas Keats was a "native of Devon." His daughter, Mrs. Llanos, tells me she remembers hearing as a child that he came from the Land's End. Persons of the name are still living in Plymouth.

P. 5, note 2.—The total amount of the funds paid into Court by the executors under Mr. Jennings's will (see Preface, p. vii.) was £13,160 19s. 5d.

P. 10, note 1, and p. 70, note 1.—Of the total last mentioned, there came to the widow first and last (partly by reversion from other legatees who predeceased her) sums amounting to £9343 2s. In the Chancery proceedings the precise terms of the deed executed by Mrs. Jennings for the benefit of her grandchildren are not quoted, but only its general purport; whence it appears that the sum she made over to Messrs. Sandell and Abbey in trust for them amounted approximately to £8000, and included all the reversions fallen or still to fall in as above mentioned. The balance, it is to be presumed, she retained for her own support (she being then seventy-four).

P. 16, note 1.—The following letter written by Mr. Abbey to Mr. Taylor the publisher, under date April 18, 1821, soon after the news of Keats's death reached England, speaks for itself. The letter is from Woodhouse MSS. B.

"Sir,
I beg pardon for not replying to your favor of the 30th ult. respecting the late Mr. Jno. Keats.

"I am obliged by your note, but he having withdrawn himself from my controul, and acted contrary to my advice, I cannot interfere with his affairs.

"I am, Sir,

"Yr. mo. Hble St.,

"RICHD. ABBEY."

P. 33, note 1.—The difficulty of determining the exact date and place of Keats's first introduction to Hunt arises as follows: Cowden Clarke states plainly and circumstantially that it took place in Leigh Hunt's cottage at Hampstead. Hunt in his *Autobiography* says it was "in the spring of the year 1816" that he went to live at Hampstead in the cottage in question. Putting these two statements together, we get the result stated as probable in the text. But on the other hand there is the strongly Huntian character of Keats's *Epistle* to G. F. Mathew, dated November, 1815, which would seem to indicate an earlier acquaintance (see p. 30). Unluckily Leigh Hunt himself has darkened counsel on the point by a paragraph inserted in the last edition of his *Autobiography*, as follows (Pref. no. 7, p. 257): "It was not at Hampstead that I first saw Keats. It was at York Buildings, in the New Road (No. 8), where I wrote part of the *Indicator*, and he resided with me while in Mortimer Street, Kentish Town (No. 13), where I concluded it. I mention this for the curious in such things, among whom I am one." The student must not be misled by this remark of Hunt's, which is evidently only due to a slip of memory. It is quite true that Keats lived with Hunt in Mortimer Street, Kentish Town, during part of July and August, 1820 (see page 195), and that before moving to that address Hunt had lived for more than a year (from the autumn of 1818 to the spring of 1820) at 8 New Road. But that Keats was intimate with him two years and a half earlier, when he was in fact living not in London at all but at the Vale of Health, is abundantly certain.

P. 37, note 1.—Cowden Clarke tells how Keats, once calling and finding him fallen asleep over Chaucer, wrote on the blank space at the end of the *Floure and the Leafe* the sonnet beginning "This pleasant tale is like a little copse." Reynolds on reading it addressed to Keats the following sonnet of his own, which is unpublished (Houghton MSS.), and has a certain biographical interest. It is dated Feb. 27, 1817:

"Thy thoughts, dear Keats, are like fresh-gathered leaves,
Or white flowers pluck'd from some sweet lily bed;
They set the heart a-breathing, and they shed
The glow of meadows, mornings, and spring eves
O'er the excited soul.—Thy genius weaves

Songs that shall make the age be nature-led,
 And win that coronal for thy young head
 Which time's strange [qy. strong?] hand of freshness ne'er bereaves.
 Go on! and keep thee to thine own green way,
 Singing in that same key which Chaucer sung;
 Be thou companion of the summer day,
 Roaming the fields and older woods among:
 So shall thy muse be ever in her May,
 And thy luxuriant spirit ever young."

P. 44, note 1.—Woodhouse MSS. A contains the text of the first draft in question, with some preliminary words of Woodhouse as follows:

"The lines at p. 36 of Keats's printed poems are altered from a copy of verses written by K. at the request of his brother George, and by the latter sent as a valentine to the lady. The following is a copy of the lines as originally written:

"'Hadst thou lived in days of old,
 Oh what wonders had been told
 Of thy lively dimpled face,
 And thy footsteps full of grace:
 Of thy hair's luxurious darkling,
 Of thine eyes' expressive sparkling,
 And thy voice's swelling rapture,
 Taking hearts a ready capture.
 Oh! if thou hadst breathed then,
 Thou hadst made the Muses ten.
 Could'st thou wish for lineage higher
 Than twin sister of Thalia?
 At least for ever, ever more
 Will I call the Graces four.'"

Here follow lines 41–68 of the poem as afterwards published; and in conclusion—

"Ah me! whither shall I flee?
 Thou hast metamorphosed me.
 Do not let me sigh and pine,
 Prythee be my valentine.

"14 Feby., 1816."

P. 47, note 1.—Mrs. Procter's memory, however, betrayed her when she informed Lord Houghton that the colour of Keats's eyes was blue. That they were pure hazel-brown is certain, from the evidence alike of C. C. Clarke, of George Keats and his wife (as transmitted by their daughter Mrs. Speed to her son), and from the various portraits painted from life and posthumously by Severn and Hilton. Mrs. Procter calls his hair auburn; Mrs. Speed had heard from her father and mother that it was "golden red," which may mean nearly the same thing; I have seen a lock in the possession of Sir Charles Dilke, and should rather call it a warm brown, likely to have looked gold in the lights. Bailey in Houghton MSS. speaks of it as extraordinarily thick and curly, and says that to lay your hand on his head was like laying it "on the rich plumage of a bird." An evidently misleading description of Keats's general aspect is that of Coleridge, when he describes him as a "loose, slack, not well-dressed youth."

The sage must have been drawing from his inward eye, those intimate with Keats being of one accord as to his appearance of trim strength and "fine compactness of person." Coleridge's further mention of his hand as shrunken and old-looking seems exact.

P. 78, note 1.—The isolated expressions of Keats on this subject, which alone have been hitherto published, have exposed him somewhat unjustly to the charge of petulance and morbid suspicion. Fairness seems to require that the whole passage in which he deals with it should be given. The passage occurs in a letter to Bailey written from Hampstead and dated Oct. 8, 1817, of which only a fragment was printed by Lord Houghton, and after him by Mr. Buxton Forman (*Works*, vol. iii., p. 82, no. xvi.):

"I went to Hunt's and Haydon's, who live now neighbours.—Shelley was there—I know nothing about anything in this part of the world—every Body seems at Loggerheads. There's Hunt infatuated—there's Haydon's picture in statu quo—There's Hunt unmercifully up-and down his painting-room criticising every head most unmercifully—There's Horace Smith tired of Hunt—'The Web of our life is of mingled yarn.' . . . I am quite disgusted with literary men, and will never know another except Wordsworth—no not even Byron. Here is an instance of the friendship of such. Haydon and Hunt have known each other many years—now they live, pour ainsi dire, jealous neighbours. Haydon says to me, Keats, don't show your lines to Hunt on any account, or he will have done half for you—so it appears Hunt wishes it to be thought. When he met Reynolds in the Theatre, John told him I was getting on to the completion of 4000 lines—Ah! says Hunt, had it not been for me they would have been 7000! If he will say this to Reynolds, what would he to other people? Haydon received a Letter a little while back on the subject from some Lady, which contains a caution to me, thro' him, on this subject. Now is not all this a most paultry thing to think about?"

P. 82, note 1.—See Haydon, *Autobiography*, vol. i., pp. 384-5. The letter containing Keats's account of the same entertainment was printed for the first time by Speed, *Works*, vol. i., p. i., no. 1, where it is dated merely "Featherstone Buildings, Monday." (At Featherstone Buildings lived the family of Charles Wells.) In Houghton MSS. I find a transcript of the same letter in the hand of Mr. Coventry Patmore, with a note in Lord Houghton's hand: "These letters I did not print. R. M. M." In the transcript is added in a parenthesis after the weekday the date 5 April, 1818: but this is a mistake; the 5th of April in that year was not a Monday; and the contents of Keats's letter itself, as well as a comparison with Haydon's words in his *Autobiography*, prove beyond question that it was written on Monday, the 5th of January.

P. 87, note 1.—Similar expressions about the Devonshire weather occur in nearly all Keats's letters written thence in the course of March and April. The letter to Bailey containing the sentences quoted in my text is wrongly printed both by Lord Houghton and

Mr. Forman under date Sept., 1818. I find the same date given between brackets at the head of the same letter as transcribed in Woodhouse MSS. B, proving that an error was early made either in docketing or copying it. The contents of the letter leave no doubt as to its real date. The sentences quoted prove it to have been written not in autumn but in spring. It contains Keats's reasons both for going down to join his brother Tom at Teignmouth and for failing to visit Bailey at Oxford on the way. Now in September Keats was not at Teignmouth at all, and Bailey had left Oxford for good, and was living at his curacy in Cumberland (see p. 121). Moreover, there is an allusion by Keats himself to this letter in another which he wrote the next day to Reynolds, whereby its true date can be fixed with precision as Friday, March 18th.

P. 111, note 1. The following unpublished letter of Keats to Mr. Taylor (from Woodhouse MSS. B) has a certain interest, both in itself and as fixing the date of his departure for the North:

"Sunday evening.

"My dear Taylor,

I am sorry I have not had time to call and wish you health till my return. Really I have been hard run these last three days. However, au revoir, God keep us all well! I start tomorrow Morning. My brother Tom will I am afraid be lonely. I can scarcely ask the loan of books for him, since I still keep those you lent me a year ago. If I am overweening, you will I know be indulgent. Therefore when you shall write, do send him some you think will be most amusing—he will be careful in returning them. Let him have one of my books bound. I am ashamed to catalogue these messages. There is but one more, which ought to go for nothing as there is a lady concerned. I promised Mrs. Reynolds one of my books bound. As I cannot write in it let the opposite" [a leaf with the name and "from the author," notes Woodhouse] "be pasted in 'prythee. Remember me to Percy St.—Tell Hilton that one gratification on my return will be to find him engaged on a history piece to his own content. And tell Dewint I shall become a disputant on the landscape. Bow for me very genteely to Mrs. D. or she will not admit your diploma. Remember me to Hessey, saying I hope he'll *Carey* his point. I would not forget Woodhouse. Adieu!

Your sincere friend,

"JOHN O'GROTS.

"June 22, 1818. Hampstead." [The date and place are added by Woodhouse in red ink, presumably from the post-mark.]

P. 118, note 1.—In the concluding lines quoted in my text Mr. Buxton Forman has noticed the failure of rhyme between "All the magic of the place" and the next line, "So saying, with a spirit's glance," and has proposed, by way of improvement, to read "with a spirit's grace." I find the true explanation in Woodhouse MSS. A, where the poem is continued thus in pencil after the word "place:"

"Tis now free to stupid face,
To cutters, and to fashion boats,
To cravats and to petticoats—
The great sea shall war it down,
For its fame shall not be blown
At each farthing Quadrille dance.
So saying with a spirit's glance
He dived."

Evidently Keats was dissatisfied with the first six of these lines (as he well might be), and suppressed them in copying the piece both for his correspondents and for the press, forgetting at the same time to give any indication of the hiatus so caused.

P. 126, note 1.—Lord Houghton says, "On returning to the south, Keats found his brother alarmingly ill, and immediately joined him at Teignmouth." It is certain that no such second visit to Teignmouth was made by either brother. The error is doubtless due to the misdating of Keats's April letter to Bailey: see last note but one, p. 222.

P. 136, note 1.—Keats in this letter proves how imperfect was his knowledge of his own affairs, and how much those affairs had been mismanaged. At the time when he thus found himself near the end of the capital on which he had hitherto subsisted, there was another resource at his disposal of which it is evident he knew nothing. Quite apart from the provision made by Mrs. Jennings for her grandchildren after her husband's death, and administered by Mr. Abbey, there were the legacies Mr. Jennings himself had left them by will: one of £1000 direct; the other, of a capital to yield £50 a year, in reversion after their mother's death (see p. 5). The former sum was invested by order of the Court in Consols, and brought £1550 7s. 10d. worth of that security at the price at which it then stood. £1666 13s. 4d. worth of the same stock was farther purchased from the funds of the estate in order to yield the income of £50 a year. The interest on both these investments was duly paid to Frances Rawlings during her life, but after her death in 1810 both investments lay untouched and accumulating interest until 1823, when George Keats, to whose knowledge their existence must then have become known for the first time, received on application to the Court a fourth share of each, with its accumulations. Two years afterwards Fanny Keats received in like manner on application the remaining three shares (those of her brothers John and Tom as well as her own), the total amount paid to her being £3375 5s. 7d., and to George £1147 5s. 1d. It was a part of the ill luck which attended the poet always that the very existence of these funds must have been ignored or forgotten by his guardian and solicitors at the time when he most needed them.

P. 146, note 1.—Landor's letter to Lord Houghton on receipt of a presentation copy of the *Life and Letters*, in 1848, begins characteristically as follows:

"Bath, Aug. 29th.

Dear Milnes,

On my return to Bath last evening, after six weeks' absence, I find your valuable present of Keatses Works. He better deserves such an editor than I such a mark of your kindness. Of all our poets, excepting Shakespeare and Milton, and perhaps Chaucer, he has most of the poetical character—fire, fancy, and diversity. He has not indeed overcome so great a difficulty as Shelley in his *Cenci*, nor united so many powers of the mind as Southey in *Kehama*—but there is an effluence of power and light pervading all his works, and a freshness such as we feel in the glorious dawn of Chaucer."

P. 150, note 1.—I think there is no doubt that *Hyperion* was begun by Keats beside his brother's sick-bed in September or October, 1818, and that it is to it he alludes when he speaks in those days of "plunging into abstract images," and finding a "feverous relief" in the "abstractions" of poetry. Certainly these phrases could hardly apply to so slight a task as the translation of Ronsard's sonnet, *Nature ornant Cassandre*, which is the only specific piece of work he about the same time mentions. Brown says distinctly, of the weeks when Keats was first living with him after Tom's death in December—"It was then he wrote *Hyperion*;" but these words rather favour than exclude the supposition that it had been already begun. In his December-January letter to America Keats himself alludes to the poem by name, and says he has been "going on a little" with it; and on the 14th of February, 1819, says, "I have not gone on with *Hyperion*." During the next three months he was chiefly occupied on the *Odes*, and whether he at the same time wrote any more of *Hyperion* we cannot tell. It was certainly finished, all but the revision, by some time in April, as in that month Woodhouse had the MS. to read, and notes (see Buxton Forman, *Works*, vol. ii., p. 143) that "it contains two books and $\frac{1}{2}$ (about 900 lines in all):" the actual length of the piece as published being 883 lines and a word, and that of the draft copied by Woodhouse before revision 891 and a word (see note to p. 162). When Keats, after nearly a year's interruption of his correspondence with Bailey, tells him in a letter from Winchester in August or September, "I have also been writing parts of my *Hyperion*," this must not be taken as meaning that he has been writing them lately, but only that he has been writing them—like *Isabella* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*, which he mentions at the same time—since the date of his last letter.

P. 162, note 1.—The version of *The Eve of St. Agnes* given in Woodhouse MSS. A is copied almost without change from the corrected state of the original MS. in the possession of Mr. F. Locker-Lampson, which is in all probability that actually written by Keats at Chichester (see p. 131). The readings of the MS. in question are given with great care by Mr. Buxton Forman (*Works*, vol. ii., p. 71 foll.), but the first seven stanzas of the poem as printed are wanting in it. Students may therefore be glad to have from Woodhouse's transcript the following table of the changes in those stanzas made by the poet in the course of composition:

Stanza I.: line 1, for "chill" stood "cold;" line 4, for "was" stood "were;" line 7, for "from" stood "in;" line 9 (and Stanza II., line 1), for "prayer" stood "prayers." Stanza III.: line 7, for "went" stood "turn'd;" line 8, for "Rough" stood "Black." After stanza III. stood the following stanza, suppressed in the poem as printed:

4.

"But there are ears may hear sweet melodies,
And there are eyes to brighten festivals,
And there are feet for nimble minstrelsies,

And many a lip that for the red wine calls—
 Follow, then follow to the illumined halls,
 Follow me youth—and leave the eremite—
 Give him a tear—then trophied bannerals
 And many a brilliant tasseling of light
 Shall droop from arched ways this high baronial night."

Stanza v.: line 1, for "revelry" stood "revellers;" lines 3-5, for

"Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
 The brain new-stuff'd in youth with triumphs gay
 Of old romance. These let us wish away,"

stood the following:

"Ah what are they? the idle pulse scarce stirs,
 The muse should never make the spirit gay;
 Away, bright dulness, laughing fools away."

P. 164, note 1.—At what precise date *La Belle Dame sans Merci* was written is uncertain. As of the *Ode to Melancholy*, Keats makes no mention of this poem in his correspondence. In Woodhouse MSS. A it is dated 1819. That Woodhouse made his transcripts before or while Keats was on his Shanklin-Winchester expedition in that year is, I think, certain both from the readings of the transcripts themselves, and from the absence among them of *Lamia* and the *Ode to Autumn*. Hence it is to the first half of 1819 that *La Belle Dame sans Merci* must belong, like so much of the poet's best work besides. The line quoted in my text shows that the theme was already in his mind when he composed *The Eve of St. Agnes* in January. Mr. Buxton Forman is certainly mistaken in supposing it to have been written a year later, after his critical attack of illness (*Works*, vol. ii., p. 357, note).

P. 183, note 1.—The relation of *Hyperion*, *A Vision*, to the original *Hyperion* is a vital point in the history of Keats's mind and art, and one that has been generally misunderstood. The growth of the error is somewhat interesting to trace. The first mention of the *Vision* is in Lord Houghton's *Life and Letters*, ed. 1847, vol. i., p. 244. Having then doubtless freshly in his mind the passage of Brown's MS. memoir quoted in the text, Lord Houghton stated the matter rightly in the words following his account of *Hyperion*: "He afterwards published it as a fragment, and still later re-cast it into the shape of a *Vision*, which remains equally unfinished." When, eight years later, the same editor printed the piece for the first time (in *Miscellanies of the Philobiblon Society*, vol. iii., 1856-7) from the MS. given him by Brown, he must have forgotten Brown's account of its origin, and writes doubtfully: "Is it the original sketch out of which the earlier part of the poem was composed, or is it the commencement of a reconstruction of the whole? I have no external evidence to decide this question;" and further: "The problem of the priority of the two poems—both fragments, and both so beautiful—may afford a wide field for ingenious and critical conjecture." Ten years later again, when he brought out the second edition of the *Life and*

Letters, Lord Houghton had drifted definitely into a wrong conclusion on the point, and printing the piece in his Appendix as "Another Version," says in his text (p. 206), "On reconsideration, I have no doubt that it was the first draft." Accordingly it is given as "an earlier version" in Mr. W. M. Rossetti's edition of 1872, as "the first version" in Lord Houghton's own edition of 1876; and so on, positively but quite wrongly, in the several editions by Messrs. Buxton Forman, Speed, and W. T. Arnold. The obvious superiority of *Hyperion* to the *Vision* no doubt at first sight suggested the conclusion to which these editors, following Lord Houghton, had come. In the meantime at least two good critics, Mr. W. B. Scott and Mr. R. Garnett, had always held on internal evidence that the *Vision* was not a first draft, but a recast attempted by the poet in the decline of his powers: an opinion in which Mr. Garnett was confirmed by his recollection of a statement to that effect in the lost MS. of Woodhouse (see above, Preface, p. v., and W. T. Arnold, *Works*, etc., p. xlix., note). Brown's words, quoted in my text, leave no doubt whatever that these gentlemen were right. They are confirmed from another side by Woodhouse MSS. A, which contains the copy of a real early draft of *Hyperion*. In this copy the omissions and alterations made in revising the piece are all marked in pencil, and are as follows (taking the number of lines in the several books of the poem as printed):

BOOK I. After line 21 stood the cancelled lines,

"Thus the old Eagle, drowsy with great grief,
Sat moulting his weak plumage, never more
To be restored or soar against the sun;
While his three sons upon Olympus stood."

In line 30, for "stay'd Ixion's wheel" stood "eased Ixion's toil." In line 48, for "tone" stood "tune." In line 76, for "gradual" stood "sudden." In line 102, after the word "Saturn," stood the cancelled words,

"What dost think?
Am I that same? O Chaos!"

In line 156, for "yielded like the mist" stood "gave to them like mist." In line 189, for "Savour of poisonous brass" stood "A poison-feel of brass." In line 200, for "When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers" stood "When an earthquake hath shook their city towers." After line 205 stood the cancelled line "Most like a rose-bud to a fairy's lute." In line 209, for "And like a rose" stood "Yes, like a rose." In line 268, for "Suddenly" stood "And, sudden."

BOOK II. In line 128, for "vibrating" stood "vibrated." In line 134, for "starry Uranus" stood "starr'd Uranus" (some friend doubtless called Keats's attention to the false quantity).

BOOK III. After line 125 stood the cancelled lines,

"Into a hue more roseate than sweet pain
Gives to a ravish'd nymph, when her warm tears
Gush luscious with no sob; or more severe."

In line 126, for "most like" stood "more like."

In these omissions and corrections two things will be apparent to the student: first, that they are all greatly for the better, and second, that where a corrected passage occurs again in the *Vision*, it in every case corresponds to the printed *Hyperion*, and not to the draft of the poem preserved by Woodhouse. This of itself would make it certain that the *Vision* was not a first version of *Hyperion*, but a recast of the poem as revised (in all probability at Winchester) after its first composition. Taken together with the statement of Brown, which is perfectly explicit as to time, place, and circumstances, and the corresponding statement of Woodhouse as recollected by Mr. Garnett, the proof is from all sides absolute; and the "first version" theory must disappear henceforward from editions of and commentaries on our poet.

P. 191, note 1.—A more explicit refutation of Haydon's account was given, some years after its appearance, by Cowden Clarke (see Preface, no. 10); not, indeed, from personal observation at the time in question, but from general knowledge of the poet's character:

"I can scarcely conceive of anything more unjust than the account which that ill-ordered being, Haydon, the artist, left behind him in his 'Diary' respecting the idolised object of his former intimacy, John Keats. . . . Haydon's detraction was the more odious because its object could not contradict the charge, and because it supplied his old critical antagonists (if any remained) with an authority for their charge against him of Cockney ostentation and display. The most mean-spirited and trumpery twaddle in the paragraph was, that Keats was so far gone in sensual excitement as to put cayenne pepper on his tongue when taking his claret. In the first place, if the stupid trick were ever played, I have not the slightest belief in its serious sincerity. During my knowledge of him Keats never purchased a bottle of claret; and from such observation as could not escape me, I am bound to say that his domestic expenses never would have occasioned him a regret or a self-reproof; and, lastly, I never perceived in him even a tendency to imprudent indulgence."

P. 195, note 1.—In Medwin's *Life of Shelley* (1847), pp. 89–92, are some notices of Keats communicated to the writer by Fanny Brawne (then Mrs. Lindon), to whom Medwin alludes as his "kind correspondent." Medwin's carelessness of statement and workmanship is well known: he is perfectly casual in the use of quotation marks and the like; but I think an attentive reading of the paragraph beginning on p. 90, which discusses Mr. Finch's account of Keats's death, leaves no doubt that it continues in substance the quotation previously begun from Mrs. Lindon. "That his sensibility," so runs the text, "was most acute, is true, and his passions were very strong, but not violent; if by that term, violence of temper is implied. His was no doubt susceptible, but his anger seemed rather to turn on himself than others, and in moments of greatest irritation it was only by a sort of savage despondency that he sometimes grieved and

wounded his friends. Violence such as the letter" [of Mr. Finch] "describes was quite foreign to his nature. For more than a twelve-month before quitting England I saw him every day" [this would be true of Fanny Brawne from Oct., 1819, to Sept., 1820, if we except the Kentish Town period in the summer, and is certainly more nearly true of her than of anyone else], "I often witnessed his sufferings, both mental and bodily, and I do not hesitate to say that he never could have addressed an unkind expression, much less a violent one, to any human being." The above passage has been overlooked by critics of Keats, and I am glad to bring it forward, as serving to show a truer and kinder appreciation of the poet by the woman he loved than might be gathered from her phrase in the letter to Dilke so often quoted.

THE END.

HAWTHORNE

BY

HENRY JAMES, JR.

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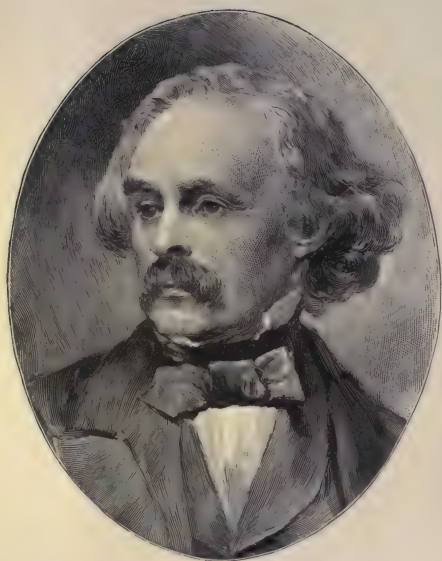
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HAWTHORNE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS.

It will be necessary, for several reasons, to give this short sketch the form rather of a critical essay than of a biography. The data for a life of Nathaniel Hawthorne are the reverse of copious, and even if they were abundant they would serve but in a limited measure the purpose of the biographer. Hawthorne's career was probably as tranquil and uneventful a one as ever fell to the lot of a man of letters; it was almost strikingly deficient in incident, in what may be called the dramatic quality. Few men of equal genius and of equal eminence can have led, on the whole, a simpler life. His six volumes of Note-Books illustrate this simplicity; they are a sort of monument to an unagitated fortune. Hawthorne's career had vicissitudes or variations; it was passed, for the most part, in a small and homogeneous society, in a provincial, rural community; it had few perceptible points of contact with what is called the world, with public events, with the manners of his time, even with the life of his neighbours. Its literary incidents are not numerous. He produced, in

quantity, but little. His works consist of four novels and the fragment of another, five volumes of short tales, a collection of sketches, and a couple of story-books for children. And yet some account of the man and the writer is well worth giving. Whatever may have been Hawthorne's private lot, he has the importance of being the most beautiful and most eminent representative of a literature. The importance of the literature may be questioned, but at any rate, in the field of letters, Hawthorne is the most valuable example of the American genius. That genius has not, as a whole, been literary; but Hawthorne was on his limited scale a master of expression. He is the writer to whom his countrymen most confidently point when they wish to make a claim to have enriched the mother-tongue, and, judging from present appearances, he will long occupy this honourable position. If there is something very fortunate for him in the way that he borrows an added relief from the absence of competitors in his own line, and from the general flatness of the literary field that surrounds him, there is also, to a spectator, something almost touching in his situation. He was so modest and delicate a genius that we may fancy him appealing from the lonely honour of a representative attitude—perceiving a painful incongruity between his imponderable literary baggage and the large conditions of American life. Hawthorne, on the one side, is so subtle and slender and unpretending, and the American world, on the other, is so vast and various and substantial, that it might seem to the author of *The Scarlet Letter* and the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, that we render him a poor service in contrasting his proportions with those of a great civilization. But our author must accept the awkward as well as the graceful side of his fame; for he has the advantage of pointing

a valuable moral. This moral is that the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, that it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion. American civilization has hitherto had other things to do than to produce flowers, and before giving birth to writers it has wisely occupied itself with providing something for them to write about. Three or four beautiful plants of trans-Atlantic growth are the sum of what the world usually recognises, and in this modest nosegay the genius of Hawthorne is admitted to have the rarest and sweetest fragrance.

His very simplicity has been in his favour; it has helped him to appear complete and homogeneous. To talk of his being national would be to force the note and make a mistake of proportion; but he is, in spite of the absence of the realistic quality, intensely and vividly local. Out of the soil of New England he sprang—in a crevice of that immitigable granite he sprouted and bloomed. Half of the interest that he possesses for an American reader with any turn for analysis must reside in his latent New England savour; and I think it no more than just to say that whatever entertainment he may yield to those who know him at a distance, it is an almost indispensable condition of properly appreciating him to have received a personal impression of the manners, the morals, indeed of the very climate, of the great region of which the remarkable city of Boston is the metropolis. The cold, bright air of New England seems to blow through his pages, and these, in the opinion of many people, are the medium in which it is most agreeable to make the acquaintance of that tonic atmosphere. As to whether it is worth while to seek to know something of New England in order to extract a

more intimate quality from *The House of Seven Gables* and *The Blithedale Romance*, I need not pronounce; but it is certain that a considerable observation of the society to which these productions were more directly addressed is a capital preparation for enjoying them. I have alluded to the absence in Hawthorne of that quality of realism which is now so much in fashion, an absence in regard to which there will of course be more to say; and yet I think I am not fanciful in saying that he testifies to the sentiments of the society in which he flourished almost as pertinently (proportions observed) as Balzac and some of his descendants—MM. Flaubert and Zola—testify to the manners and morals of the French people. He was not a man with a literary theory; he was guiltless of a system, and I am not sure that he had ever heard of Realism, this remarkable compound having (although it was invented some time earlier) come into general use only since his death. He had certainly not proposed to himself to give an account of the social idiosyncrasies of his fellow-citizens, for his touch on such points is always light and vague, he has none of the apparatus of an historian, and his shadowy style of portraiture never suggests a rigid standard of accuracy. Nevertheless, he virtually offers the most vivid reflection of New England life that has found its way into literature. His value in this respect is not diminished by the fact that he has not attempted to portray the usual Yankee of comedy, and that he has been almost culpably indifferent to his opportunities for commemorating the variations of colloquial English that may be observed in the New World. His characters do not express themselves in the dialect of the *Biglow Papers*—their language, indeed, is apt to be too elegant, too delicate. They are not portraits of actual types, and in their phraseology there is

nothing imitative. But none the less, Hawthorne's work savours thoroughly of the local soil—it is redolent of the social system in which he had his being.

This could hardly fail to be the case, when the man himself was so deeply rooted in the soil. Hawthorne sprang from the primitive New England stock; he had a very definite and conspicuous pedigree. He was born at Salem, Massachusetts, on the 4th of July, 1804, and his birthday was the great American festival, the anniversary of the Declaration of national Independence.¹ Hawthorne was in his disposition an unqualified and unflinching American; he found occasion to give us the measure of the fact during the seven years that he spent in Europe towards the close of his life; and this was no more than proper on the part of a man who had enjoyed the honour of coming into the world on the day on which of all the days in the year the great Republic enjoys her acutest fit of self-consciousness. Moreover, a person who has been ushered into life by the ringing of bells and the booming of cannon (unless indeed he be frightened straight out of it again by the uproar of his awakening) receives by this very fact an injunction to do something great, something that will justify such striking natal accompani-

¹ It is proper that before I go further I should acknowledge my large obligations to the only biography of our author, of any considerable length, that has been written—the little volume entitled *A Study of Hawthorne*, by Mr. George Parsons Lathrop, the son-in-law of the subject of the work. (Boston, 1876.) To this ingenious and sympathetic sketch, in which the author has taken great pains to collect the more interesting facts of Hawthorne's life, I am greatly indebted. Mr. Lathrop's work is not pitched in the key which many another writer would have chosen, and his tone is not to my sense the truly critical one; but without the help afforded by his elaborate essay the present little volume could not have been prepared.

ments. Hawthorne was by race of the clearest Puritan strain. His earliest American ancestor (who wrote the name "Hathorne"—the shape in which it was transmitted to Nathaniel, who inserted the *w*) was the younger son of a Wiltshire family, whose residence, according to a note of our author's in 1837, was "Wigcastle, Wigton." Hawthorne, in the note in question, mentions the gentleman who was at that time the head of the family; but it does not appear that he at any period renewed acquaintance with his English kinsfolk. Major William Hawthorne came out to Massachusetts in the early years of the Puritan settlement; in 1635 or 1636, according to the note to which I have just alluded; in 1630, according to information presumably more accurate. He was one of the band of companions of the virtuous and exemplary John Winthrop, the almost lifelong royal Governor of the young colony, and the brightest and most amiable figure in the early Puritan annals. How amiable William Hawthorne may have been I know not, but he was evidently of the stuff of which the citizens of the Commonwealth were best advised to be made. He was a sturdy fighting man, doing solid execution upon both the inward and outward enemies of the State. The latter were the savages, the former the Quakers; the energy expended by the early Puritans in resistance to the tomahawk not weakening their disposition to deal with spiritual dangers. They employed the same—or almost the same—weapons in both directions; the flintlock and the halberd against the Indians, and the cat-o'-nine-tails against the heretics. One of the longest, though by no means one of the most successful, of Hawthorne's shorter tales (*The Gentle Boy*) deals with this pitiful persecution of the least aggressive of all schismatic bodies. William Hathorne, who had been

made a magistrate of the town of Salem, where a grant of land had been offered him as an inducement to residence, figures in New England history as having given orders that "Anne Coleman and four of her friends" should be whipped through Salem, Boston, and Dedham. This Anne Coleman; I suppose, is the woman alluded to in that fine passage in the Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, in which Hawthorne pays a qualified tribute to the founder of the American branch of his race.

"The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a sort of home-feeling with the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present, phase of the town. I seem to have a stronger claim to a residence here on account of this grave, bearded, sable-cloaked and steeple-crowned progenitor—who came so early, with his Bible and his sword, and trode the unworn street with such a stately port, and made so large a figure as a man of war and peace—a stronger claim than for myself, whose name is seldom heard and my face hardly known. He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor, as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any of his better deeds, though these were many."

William Hathorne died in 1681; but those hard qualities that his descendant speaks of were reproduced in his son John, who bore the title of Colonel, and who was connected, too intimately for his honour, with that deplorable episode of New England history, the persecution of the

so-called Witches of Salem. John Hathorne is introduced into the little drama entitled *The Salem Farms*, in Longfellow's *New England Tragedies*. I know not whether he had the compensating merits of his father, but our author speaks of him, in the continuation of the passage I have just quoted, as having made himself so conspicuous in the martyrdom of the witches, that their blood may be said to have left a stain upon him. "So deep a stain, indeed," Hawthorne adds, characteristically, "that his old dry bones in the Charter Street burial-ground must still retain it, if they have not crumbled utterly to dust." Readers of *The House of the Seven Gables* will remember that the story concerns itself with a family which is supposed to be overshadowed by a curse launched against one of its earlier members by a poor man occupying a lowlier place in the world, whom this ill-advised ancestor had been the means of bringing to justice for the crime of witchcraft. Hawthorne apparently found the idea of the history of the Pyncheons in his own family annals. His witch-judging ancestor was reported to have incurred a malediction from one of his victims, in consequence of which the prosperity of the race faded utterly away. "I know not," the passage I have already quoted goes on, "whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent and ask pardon of Heaven for their cruelties, or whether they are now groaning under the heavy consequences of them in another state of being. At all events, I, the present writer, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them—as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race for some time back would argue to exist—may be now and henceforth removed." The two first American Hathornes had been people of importance and

responsibility; but with the third generation the family lapsed into an obscurity from which it emerged in the very person of the writer, who begs so gracefully for a turn in its affairs. It is very true, Hawthorne proceeds, in the Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, that from the original point of view such lustre as he might have contrived to confer upon the name would have appeared more than questionable.

“Either of these stern and black-browed Puritans would have thought it quite a sufficient retribution for his sins that after so long a lapse of years the old trunk of the family tree, with so much venerable moss upon it, should have borne, as its topmost bough, an idler like myself. No aim that I have ever cherished would they recognise as laudable; no success of mine, if my life, beyond its domestic scope, had ever been brightened by success, would they deem otherwise than worthless, if not positively disgraceful. ‘What is he?’ murmurs one grey shadow of my forefathers to the other. ‘A writer of story-books! What kind of a business in life, what manner of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation, may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!’ Such are the compliments bandied between my great- grandsires and myself across the gulf of time! And yet, let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine.”

In this last observation we may imagine that there was not a little truth. Poet and novelist as Hawthorne was, sceptic and dreamer and little of a man of action, late-coming fruit of a tree which might seem to have lost the power to bloom, he was morally, in an appreciative degree, a chip of the old block. His forefathers had crossed the Atlantic for conscience’ sake, and it was the idea of the

urgent conscience that haunted the imagination of their so-called degenerate successor. The Puritan strain in his blood ran clear—there are passages in his Diaries, kept during his residence in Europe, which might almost have been written by the grimmest of the old Salem worthies. To him as to them, the consciousness of *sin* was the most importunate fact of life; and if they had undertaken to write little tales, this baleful substantive, with its attendant adjective, could hardly have been more frequent in their pages than in those of their fanciful descendant. Hawthorne had, moreover, in his composition, contemplator and dreamer as he was, an element of simplicity and rigidity, a something plain and masculine and sensible, which might have kept his black-browed grandsires on better terms with him than he admits to be possible. However little they might have appreciated the artist, they would have approved of the man. The play of Hawthorne's intellect was light and capricious, but the man himself was firm and rational. The imagination was profane, but the temper was not degenerate.

The “dreary and unprosperous condition” that he speaks of in regard to the fortunes of his family is an allusion to the fact that several generations followed each other on the soil in which they had been planted, that during the eighteenth century a succession of Hathornes trod the simple streets of Salem without ever conferring any especial lustre upon the town or receiving, presumably, any great delight from it. A hundred years of Salem would perhaps be rather a dead-weight for any family to carry, and we venture to imagine that the Hathornes were dull and depressed. They did what they could, however, to improve their situation; they trod the Salem streets as little as possible. They went to sea, and

made long voyages; seamanship became the regular profession of the family. Hawthorne has said it in charming language. "From father to son, for above a hundred years, they followed the sea; a grey-headed shipmaster, in each generation, retiring from the quarter-deck to the homestead, while a boy of fourteen took the hereditary place before the mast, confronting the salt spray and the gale which had blustered against his sire and grandsire. The boy also, in due time, passed from the forecastle to the cabin, spent a tempestuous manhood, and returned from his world-wanderings to grow old and die, and mingle his dust with the natal earth." Our author's grandfather, Daniel Hathorne, is mentioned by Mr. Lathrop, his biographer and son-in-law, as a hardy privateer during the war of Independence. His father, from whom he was named, was also a shipmaster, and he died in foreign lands, in the exercise of his profession. He was carried off by a fever, at Surinam, in 1808. He left three children, of whom Nathaniel was the only boy. The boy's mother, who had been a Miss Manning, came of a New England stock almost as long established as that of her husband; she is described by our author's biographer as a woman of remarkable beauty, and by an authority whom he quotes, as being "a minute observer of religious festivals," of "feasts, fasts, new-moons, and Sabbaths." Of feasts the poor lady in her Puritanic home can have had but a very limited number to celebrate; but of new-moons she may be supposed to have enjoyed the usual, and of Sabbaths even more than the usual, proportion.

In quiet provincial Salem, Nathaniel Hawthorne passed the greater part of his boyhood, as well as many years of his later life. Mr. Lathrop has much to say about the ancient picturesqueness of the place, and about the mystic

influences it would project upon such a mind and character as Hawthorne's. These things are always relative, and in appreciating them everything depends upon the point of view. Mr. Lathrop writes for American readers, who in such a matter as this are very easy to please. Americans have, as a general thing, a hungry passion for the picturesque, and they are so fond of local colour that they contrive to perceive it in localities in which the amateurs of other countries would detect only the most neutral tints. History, as yet, has left in the United States but so thin and impalpable a deposit that we very soon touch the hard substratum of nature; and nature herself, in the Western World, has the peculiarity of seeming rather crude and immature. The very air looks new and young; the light of the sun seems fresh and innocent, as if it knew as yet but few of the secrets of the world and none of the weariness of shining; the vegetation has the appearance of not having reached its majority. A large juvenility is stamped upon the face of things, and in the vividness of the present, the past, which died so young and had time to produce so little, attracts but scanty attention. I doubt whether English observers would discover any very striking trace of it in the ancient town of Salem. Still, with all respect to a York and a Shrewsbury, to a Toledo and a Verona, Salem has a physiognomy in which the past plays a more important part than the present. It is of course a very recent past; but one must remember that the dead of yesterday are not more alive than those of a century ago. I know not of what picturesqueness Hawthorne was conscious in his respectable birthplace; I suspect his perception of it was less keen than his biographer assumes it to have been; but he must have felt at least that, of whatever complexity of earlier life there had been in the coun-

try, the elm-shadowed streets of Salem were a recognisable memento. He has made considerable mention of the place, here and there, in his tales ; but he has nowhere dilated upon it very lovingly, and it is noteworthy that in *The House of the Seven Gables*, the only one of his novels of which the scene is laid in it, he has by no means availed himself of the opportunity to give a description of it. He had of course a filial fondness for it—a deep-seated sense of connection with it ; but he must have spent some very dreary years there, and the two feelings, the mingled tenderness and rancour, are visible in the Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*.

“The old town of Salem,” he writes—“my native place, though I have dwelt much away from it, both in boyhood and in maturer years—possesses, or did possess, a hold on my affections, the force of which I have never realized during my seasons of actual residence here. Indeed, so far as the physical aspect is concerned, with its flat, unvaried surface, covered chiefly with wooden houses, few or none of which pretend to architectural beauty ; its irregularity, which is neither picturesque nor quaint, but only tame ; its long and lazy street, lounging wearisomely through the whole extent of the peninsula, with Gallows Hill and New Guinea at one end, and a view of the almshouse at the other—such being the features of my native town, it would be quite as reasonable to form a sentimental attachment to a disarranged chequer-board.”

But he goes on to say that he has never divested himself of the sense of intensely belonging to it—that the spell of the continuity of his life with that of his predecessors has never been broken. “It is no matter that the place is joyless for him ; that he is weary of the old wooden houses, the mud and the dust, the dead level of

site and sentiment, the chill east wind, and the chilliest of social atmosphere ;—all these, and whatever faults besides he may see or imagine, are nothing to the purpose. The spell survives, and just as powerfully as if the natal spot were an earthly paradise." There is a very American quality in this perpetual consciousness of a spell on Hawthorne's part ; it is only in a country where newness and change and brevity of tenure are the common substance of life, that the fact of one's ancestors having lived for a hundred and seventy years in a single spot would become an element of one's morality. It is only an imaginative American that would feel urged to keep reverting to this circumstance, to keep analysing and cunningly considering it.

The Salem of to-day has, as New England towns go, a physiognomy of its own, and in spite of Hawthorne's analogy of the disarranged draught-board, it is a decidedly agreeable one. The spreading elms in its streets ; the proportion of large, square, honourable-looking houses, suggesting an easy, copious material life ; the little gardens ; the grassy waysides ; the open windows ; the air of space and salubrity and decency ; and above all the intimation of larger antecedents—these things compose a picture which has little of the element that painters call depth of tone, but which is not without something that they would admit to be style. To English eyes the oldest and most honourable of the smaller American towns must seem in a manner primitive and rustic ; the shabby, straggling, village-quality appears marked in them, and their social tone is not unnaturally inferred to bear the village stamp. Village-like they are, and it would be no gross incivility to describe them as large, respectable, prosperous, democratic villages. But even a village, in a great and vigorous

democracy, where there are no overshadowing squires, where the "county" has no social existence, where the villagers are conscious of no superincumbent strata of gentility, piled upwards into vague regions of privilege—even a village is not an institution to accept of more or less graceful patronage; it thinks extremely well of itself, and is absolute in its own regard. Salem is a sea-port, but it is a sea-port deserted and decayed. It belongs to that rather melancholy group of old coast-towns scattered along the great sea-face of New England, and of which the list is completed by the names of Portsmouth, Plymouth, New Bedford, Newburyport, Newport—superannuated centres of the traffic with foreign lands, which have seen their trade carried away from them by the greater cities. As Hawthorne says, their ventures have gone "to swell, needlessly and imperceptibly, the mighty flood of commerce at New York or Boston." Salem, at the beginning of the present century, played a great part in the Eastern trade; it was the residence of enterprising shipowners who despatched their vessels to Indian and Chinese seas. It was a place of large fortunes, many of which have remained, though the activity that produced them has passed away. These successful traders constituted what Hawthorne calls "the aristocratic class." He alludes in one of his slighter sketches (*The Sister Years*) to the sway of this class, and the "moral influence of wealth" having been more marked in Salem than in any other New England town. The sway, we may believe, was on the whole gently exercised, and the moral influence of wealth was not exerted in the cause of immorality. Hawthorne was probably but imperfectly conscious of an advantage which familiarity had made stale—the fact that he lived in the most democratic and most virtuous of modern communi-

ties. Of the virtue it is but civil to suppose that his own family had a liberal share; but not much of the wealth, apparently, came into their way. Hawthorne was not born to a patrimony, and his income, later in life, never exceeded very modest proportions.

Of his childish years there appears to be nothing very definite to relate, though his biographer devotes a good many graceful pages to them. There is a considerable sameness in the behaviour of small boys, and it is probable that if we were acquainted with the details of our author's infantine career we should find it to be made up of the same pleasures and pains as that of many ingenuous lads for whom fame has had nothing in keeping.

The absence of precocious symptoms of genius is, on the whole, more striking in the lives of men who have distinguished themselves than their juvenile promise; though it must be added that Mr. Lathrop has made out, as he was almost in duty bound to do, a very good case in favour of Hawthorne's having been an interesting child. He was not at any time what would be called a sociable man, and there is therefore nothing unexpected in the fact that he was fond of long walks in which he was not known to have had a companion. "Juvenile literature" was but scantily known at that time, and the enormous and extraordinary contribution made by the United States to this department of human happiness was locked in the bosom of futurity. The young Hawthorne, therefore, like many of his contemporaries, was constrained to amuse himself, for want of anything better, with the *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Faery Queen*. A boy may have worse company than Bunyan and Spenser, and it is very probable that in his childish rambles our author may have had associates of whom there could be no record. When he

was nine years old, he met with an accident at school which threatened for awhile to have serious results. He was struck on the foot by a ball, and so severely lamed that he was kept at home for a long time, and had not completely recovered before his twelfth year. His school, it is to be supposed, was the common day-school of New England—the primary factor in that extraordinarily pervasive system of instruction in the plainer branches of learning which forms one of the principal ornaments of American life. In 1818, when he was fourteen years old, he was taken by his mother to live in the house of an uncle, her brother, who was established in the town of Raymond, near Lake Sebago, in the State of Maine. The immense State of Maine, in the year 1818, must have had an even more magnificently natural character than it possesses at the present day, and the uncle's dwelling, in consequence of being in a little smarter style than the primitive structures that surrounded it, was known by the villagers as Manning's Folly. Mr. Lathrop pronounces this region to be of a "weird and woodsy" character; and Hawthorne, later in life, spoke of it to a friend as the place where "I first got my cursed habits of solitude." The outlook, indeed, for an embryonic novelist, would not seem to have been cheerful; the social dreariness of a small New England community lost amid the forests of Maine, at the beginning of the present century, must have been consummate. But for a boy with a relish for solitude there were many natural resources, and we can understand that Hawthorne should in after-years have spoken very tenderly of this episode. "I lived in Maine like a bird of the air, so perfect was the freedom I enjoyed." During the long summer days he roamed, gun in hand, through the great woods; and during the moonlight nights

of winter, says his biographer, quoting another informant, "he would skate until midnight, all alone, upon Sebago Lake, with the deep shadows of the icy hills on either hand."

In 1819 he was sent back to Salem to school; and in the following year he wrote to his mother, who had remained at Raymond (the boy had found a home at Salem with another uncle), "I have left school, and have begun to fit for college under Benjm. L. Oliver, Lawyer. So you are in danger of having one learned man in your family. . . . I get my lessons at home, and recite them to him (Mr. Oliver) at seven o'clock in the morning. . . . Shall you want me to be a Minister, Doctor, or Lawyer? A Minister I will not be." He adds, at the close of this epistle—"O how I wish I was again with you, with nothing to do but to go a-gunning! But the happiest days of my life are gone." In 1821, in his seventeenth year, he entered Bowdoin College, at Brunswick, Maine. This institution was in the year 1821—a quarter of a century after its foundation—a highly honourable, but not a very elaborately organized, nor a particularly impressive, seat of learning. I say it was not impressive, but I immediately remember that impressions depend upon the minds receiving them; and that to a group of simple New England lads, upwards of sixty years ago, the halls and groves of Bowdoin, neither dense nor lofty though they can have been, may have seemed replete with Academic stateliness. It was a homely, simple, frugal, "country college," of the old-fashioned American stamp; exerting within its limits a civilizing influence, working, amid the forests and the lakes, the log-houses and the clearings, toward the amenities and humanities and other collegiate graces, and offering a very sufficient education to the future lawyers, mer-

chants, clergymen, politicians, and editors, of the very active and knowledge-loving community that supported it. It did more than this—it numbered poets and statesmen among its undergraduates, and on the roll-call of its sons it has several distinguished names. Among Hawthorne's fellow-students was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who divides with our author the honour of being the most distinguished of American men of letters. I know not whether Mr. Longfellow was especially intimate with Hawthorne at this period (they were very good friends later in life), but with two of his companions he formed a friendship which lasted always. One of these was Franklin Pierce, who was destined to fill what Hawthorne calls "the most august position in the world." Pierce was elected President of the United States in 1852. The other was Horatio Bridge, who afterwards served with distinction in the navy, and to whom the charming prefatory letter of the collection of tales published under the name of *The Snow Image* is addressed. "If anybody is responsible at this day for my being an author, it is yourself. I know not whence your faith came; but while we were lads together at a country college—gathering blueberries in study-hours under those tall Academic pines; or watching the great logs as they tumbled along the current of the Androscoggin; or shooting pigeons and gray squirrels in the woods; or bat-fowling in the summer twilight; or catching trout in that shadowy little stream which, I suppose, is still wandering riverward through the forest—though you and I will never cast a line in it again—two idle lads, in short (as we need not fear to acknowledge now), doing a hundred things the Faculty never heard of, or else it had been worse for us—still it was your prognostic of your friend's destiny that he was to be a writer of fiction." That is a very pretty pict-

ure, but it is a picture of happy urchins at school, rather than of undergraduates "panting," as Macaulay says "for one-and-twenty." Poor Hawthorne was indeed thousands of miles away from Oxford and Cambridge; that touch about the blueberries and the logs on the Androscoggin tells the whole story, and strikes the note, as it were, of his circumstances. But if the pleasures at Bowdoin were not expensive, so neither were the penalties. The amount of Hawthorne's collegiate bill for one term was less than 4*l.*, and of this sum more than 9*s.* was made up of fines. The fines, however, were not heavy. Mr. Lathrop prints a letter addressed by the President to "Mrs. Elizabeth C. Hawthorne," requesting her co-operation with the officers of this college "in the attempt to induce your son faithfully to observe the laws of this institution." He had just been fined fifty cents for playing cards for money during the preceding term. "Perhaps he might not have gamed," the President adds, "were it not for the influence of a student whom we have dismissed from college." The biographer quotes a letter from Hawthorne to one of his sisters, in which the writer says, in allusion to this remark, that it is a great mistake to think that he has been led away by the wicked ones. "I was fully as willing to play as the person he suspects of having enticed me, and would have been influenced by no one. I have a great mind to commence playing again, merely to show him that I scorn to be seduced by another into anything wrong." There is something in these few words that accords with the impression that the observant reader of Hawthorne gathers of the personal character that underlay his duskily-sportive imagination—an impression of simple manliness and transparent honesty.

He appears to have been a fair scholar, but not a brill-

iant one; and it is very probable that, as the standard of scholarship at Bowdoin was not high, he graduated none the less comfortably on this account. Mr. Lathrop is able to testify to the fact, by no means a surprising one, that he wrote verses at college, though the few stanzas that the biographer quotes are not such as to make us especially regret that his rhyming mood was a transient one.

“ The ocean hath its silent caves,
Deep, quiet and alone.
Though there be fury on the waves,
Beneath them there is none.”

That quatrain may suffice to decorate our page. And in connection with his college days, I may mention his first novel, a short romance entitled *Fanshawe*, which was published in Boston in 1828, three years after he graduated. It was probably also written after that event, but the scene of the tale is laid at Bowdoin (which figures under an altered name); and Hawthorne's attitude with regard to the book, even shortly after it was published, was such as to assign it to this boyish period. It was issued anonymously; but he so repented of his venture that he annihilated the edition, of which, according to Mr. Lathrop, “not half a dozen copies are now known to be extant.” I have seen none of these rare volumes, and I know nothing of *Fanshawe* but what the writer just quoted relates. It is the story of a young lady who goes in rather an odd fashion to reside at “Harley College” (equivalent of Bowdoin), under the care and guardianship of Dr. Melmoth, the President of the institution, a venerable, amiable, unworldly, and henpecked scholar. Here she becomes, very naturally, an object of interest to two of the students; in regard to whom I cannot do better than quote Mr. Lathrop. One

of these young men "is Edward Wolcott, a wealthy, handsome, generous, healthy young fellow from one of the seaport towns; and the other, Fanshawe the hero, who is a poor but ambitious recluse, already passing into a decline through overmuch devotion to books and meditation. Fanshawe, though the deeper nature of the two, and intensely moved by his new passion, perceiving that a union between himself and Ellen could not be a happy one, resigns the hope of it from the beginning. But circumstances bring him into intimate relation with her. The real action of the book, after the preliminaries, takes up only some three days, and turns upon the attempt of a man named Butler to entice Ellen away under his protection, then marry her, and secure the fortune to which she is heiress. This scheme is partly frustrated by circumstances, and Butler's purpose towards Ellen thus becomes a much more sinister one. From this she is rescued by Fanshawe; and knowing that he loves her, but is concealing his passion, she gives him the opportunity and the right to claim her hand. For a moment the rush of desire and hope is so great that he hesitates; then he refuses to take advantage of her generosity, and parts with her for a last time. Ellen becomes engaged to Wolcott, who had won her heart from the first; and Fanshawe, sinking into rapid consumption, dies before his class graduates." The story must have had a good deal of innocent lightness; and it is a proof of how little the world of observation lay open to Hawthorne at this time, that he should have had no other choice than to make his little drama go forward between the rather naked walls of Bowdoin, where the presence of his heroine was an essential incongruity. He was twenty-four years old, but the "world," in its social sense, had not disclosed itself to him. He had, how-

ever, already, at moments, a very pretty writer's touch, as witness this passage, quoted by Mr. Lathrop, and which is worth transcribing. The heroine has gone off with the nefarious Butler, and the good Dr. Melmoth starts in pursuit of her, attended by young Wolcott.

“‘Alas, youth, these are strange times,’ observed the President, ‘when a doctor of divinity and an undergraduate set forth, like a knight-errant and his squire, in search of a stray damsel. Methinks I am an epitome of the church militant, or a new species of polemical divinity. Pray Heaven, however, there be no such encounter in store for us; for I utterly forgot to provide myself with weapons.’

“‘I took some thought for that matter, reverend knight,’ replied Edward, whose imagination was highly tickled by Dr. Melmoth's chivalrous comparison.

“‘Ay, I see that you have girded on a sword,’ said the divine. ‘But wherewith shall I defend myself? my hand being empty except of this golden-headed staff, the gift of Mr. Langton.’

“‘One of these, if you will accept it,’ answered Edward, exhibiting a brace of pistols, ‘will serve to begin the conflict before you join the battle hand to hand.’

“‘Nay, I shall find little safety in meddling with that deadly instrument, since I know not accurately from which end proceeds the bullet,’ said Dr. Melmoth. ‘But were it not better, since we are so well provided with artillery, to betake ourselves, in the event of an encounter, to some stone wall or other place of strength?’

“‘If I may presume to advise,’ said the squire, ‘you, as being most valiant and experienced, should ride forward, lance in hand (your long staff serving for a lance), while I annoy the enemy from afar.’

“‘Like Teucer, behind the shield of Ajax,’ interrupted Dr. Melmoth, ‘or David with his stone and sling. No, no, young man; I have left unfinished in my study a learned treatise,

important not only to the present age, but to posterity, for whose sake I must take heed to my safety. But, lo! who rides yonder?"

On leaving college, Hawthorne had gone back to live at Salem.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY MANHOOD.

THE twelve years that followed were not the happiest or most brilliant phase of Hawthorne's life; they strike me, indeed, as having had an altogether peculiar dreariness. They had their uses; they were the period of incubation of the admirable compositions which eventually brought him reputation and prosperity. But of their actual aridity the young man must have had a painful consciousness; he never lost the impression of it. Mr. Lathrop quotes a phrase to this effect from one of his letters, late in life. "I am disposed to thank God for the gloom and chill of my early life, in the hope that my share of adversity came then, when I bore it alone." And the same writer alludes to a touching passage in the *English Note-Books*, which I shall quote entire:—

"I think I have been happier this Christmas (1854) than ever before—by my own fireside, and with my wife and children about me—more content to enjoy what I have, less anxious for anything beyond it, in this life. My early life was perhaps a good preparation for the declining half of life; it having been such a blank that any thereafter would compare favourably with it. For a long, long while, I have occasionally been visited with a singular dream; and I have an impression that I have dreamed it ever since I have been in

England. It is, that I am still at college, or sometimes even at school—and there is a sense that I have been there unconscionably long, and have quite failed to make such progress as my contemporaries have done; and I seem to meet some of them with a feeling of shame and depression that broods over me as I think of it, even when awake. This dream, recurring all through these twenty or thirty years, must be one of the effects of that heavy seclusion in which I shut myself up for twelve years after leaving college, when everybody moved onward and left me behind. How strange that it should come now, when I may call myself famous and prosperous!—when I am happy too.”

The allusion here is to a state of solitude which was the young man's positive choice at the time—or into which he drifted at least under the pressure of his natural shyness and reserve. He was not expansive; he was not addicted to experiments and adventures of intercourse; he was not personally, in a word, what is called sociable. The general impression of this silence-loving and shade-seeking side of his character is doubtless exaggerated, and, in so far as it points to him as a sombre and sinister figure, is almost ludicrously at fault. He was silent, diffident, more inclined to hesitate—to watch, and wait, and meditate—than to produce himself, and fonder, on almost any occasion, of being absent than of being present. This quality betrays itself in all his writings. There is in all of them something cold, and light, and thin—something belonging to the imagination alone—which indicates a man but little disposed to multiply his relations, his points of contact, with society. If we read the six volumes of Note-Books with an eye to the evidence of this unsocial side of his life, we find it in sufficient abundance. But we find at the same time that there was nothing unamiable or invidious in his shyness,

and, above all, that there was nothing preponderantly gloomy. The qualities to which the Note-Books most testify are, on the whole, his serenity and amenity of mind. They reveal these characteristics, indeed, in an almost phenomenal degree. The serenity, the simplicity, seem in certain portions almost child-like; of brilliant gaiety, of high spirits, there is little; but the placidity and evenness of temper, the cheerful and contented view of the things he notes, never belie themselves. I know not what else he may have written in this copious record, and what passages of gloom and melancholy may have been suppressed; but, as his Diaries stand, they offer in a remarkable degree the reflection of a mind whose development was not in the direction of sadness. A very clever French critic, whose fancy is often more lively than his observation is deep—M. Emile Montégut—writing in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in the year 1860, invents for our author the appellation of “Un Romancier Pessimiste.” Superficially speaking, perhaps, the title is a happy one; but only superficially. Pessimism consists in having morbid and bitter views and theories about human nature; not in indulging in shadowy fancies and conceits. There is nothing whatever to show that Hawthorne had any such doctrines or convictions; certainly the note of depression, of despair, of the disposition to undervalue the human race, is never sounded in his Diaries. These volumes contain the record of very few convictions or theories of any kind; they move with curious evenness, with a charming, graceful flow, on a level which lies above that of a man’s philosophy. They adhere with such persistence to this upper level that they prompt the reader to believe that Hawthorne had no appreciable philosophy at all—no general views that were in the least uncomfortable. They are the exhibition of an unperplexed

intellect. I said just now that the development of Hawthorne's mind was not towards sadness; and I should be inclined to go still further, and say that his mind proper—his mind in so far as it was a repository of opinions and articles of faith—had no development that it is of especial importance to look into. What had a development was his imagination—that delicate and penetrating imagination which was always at play, always entertaining itself, always engaged in a game of hide-and-seek in the region in which it seemed to him that the game could best be played—among the shadows and substructions, the dark-based pillars and supports of our moral nature. Beneath this movement and ripple of his imagination—as free and spontaneous as that of the sea-surface—lay directly his personal affections. These were solid and strong, but, according to my impression, they had the place very much to themselves.

His innocent reserve, then, and his exaggerated, but by no means cynical, relish for solitude, imposed themselves upon him, in a great measure, with a persistency which helped to make the time a tolerably arid one—so arid a one, indeed, that we have seen that in the light of later happiness he pronounced it a blank. But in truth, if these were dull years, it was not all Hawthorne's fault. His situation was intrinsically poor—poor with a poverty that one almost hesitates to look into. When we think of what the conditions of intellectual life, of taste, must have been in a small New England town fifty years ago; and when we think of a young man of beautiful genius, with a love of literature and romance, of the picturesque, of style and form and colour, trying to make a career for himself in the midst of them, compassion for the young man becomes our dominant sentiment, and we see the large, dry, village-

picture in perhaps almost too hard a light. It seems to me, then, that it was possibly a blessing for Hawthorne that he was not expansive and inquisitive, that he lived much to himself, and asked but little of his *milieu*. If he had been exacting and ambitious, if his appetite had been large and his knowledge various, he would probably have found the bounds of Salem intolerably narrow. But his culture had been of a simple sort—there was little of any other sort to be obtained in America in those days—and though he was doubtless haunted by visions of more suggestive opportunities, we may safely assume that he was not, to his own perception, the object of compassion that he appears to a critic who judges him after half a century's civilization has filtered into the twilight of that earlier time. If New England was socially a very small place in those days, Salem was a still smaller one; and if the American tone at large was intensely provincial, that of New England was not greatly helped by having the best of it. The state of things was extremely natural, and there could be now no greater mistake than to speak of it with a redundancy of irony. American life had begun to constitute itself from the foundations; it had begun to *be*, simply; it was at an immeasurable distance from having begun to enjoy. I imagine there was no appreciable group of people in New England at that time proposing to itself to enjoy life; this was not an undertaking for which any provision had been made, or to which any encouragement was offered. Hawthorne must have vaguely entertained some such design upon destiny; but he must have felt that his success would have to depend wholly upon his own ingenuity. I say he must have proposed to himself to enjoy, simply because he proposed to be an artist, and because this enters inevitably into the artist's scheme. There are a thousand ways of

enjoying life, and that of the artist is one of the most innocent. But for all that, it connects itself with the idea of pleasure. He proposes to give pleasure, and to give it he must first get it. Where he gets it will depend upon circumstances, and circumstances were not encouraging to Hawthorne.

He was poor, he was solitary, and he undertook to devote himself to literature in a community in which the interest in literature was as yet of the smallest. It is not too much to say that even to the present day it is a considerable discomfort in the United States not to be "in business." The young man who attempts to launch himself in a career that does not belong to the so-called practical order; the young man who has not, in a word, an office in the business quarter of the town, with his name painted on the door, has but a limited place in the social system, finds no particular bough to perch upon. He is not looked at askance, he is not regarded as an idler; literature and the arts have always been held in extreme honour in the American world, and those who practise them are received on easier terms than in other countries. If the tone of the American world is in some respects provincial, it is in none more so than in this matter of the exaggerated homage rendered to authorship. The gentleman or the lady who has written a book is in many circles the object of an admiration too indiscriminating to operate as an encouragement to good writing. There is no reason to suppose that this was less the case fifty years ago; but fifty years ago, greatly more than now, the literary man must have lacked the comfort and inspiration of belonging to a class. The best things come, as a general thing, from the talents that are members of a group; every man works better when he has companions working in the same line,

and yielding the stimulus of suggestion, comparison, emulation. Great things, of course, have been done by solitary workers; but they have usually been done with double the pains they would have cost if they had been produced in more genial circumstances. The solitary worker loses the profit of example and discussion; he is apt to make awkward experiments; he is in the nature of the case more or less of an empiric. The empiric may, as I say, be treated by the world as an expert; but the drawbacks and discomforts of empiricism remain to him, and are in fact increased by the suspicion that is mingled with his gratitude, of a want in the public taste of a sense of the proportions of things. Poor Hawthorne, beginning to write subtle short tales at Salem, was empirical enough; he was one of, at most, some dozen Americans who had taken up literature as a profession. The profession in the United States is still very young, and of diminutive stature; but in the year 1830 its head could hardly have been seen above-ground. It strikes the observer of to-day that Hawthorne showed great courage in entering a field in which the honours and emoluments were so scanty as the profits of authorship must have been at that time. I have said that in the United States at present authorship is a pedestal, and literature is the fashion; but Hawthorne's history is a proof that it was possible, fifty years ago, to write a great many little masterpieces without becoming known. He begins the preface to the *Twice-Told Tales* by remarking that he was "for many years the obscurest man of letters in America." When once this work obtained recognition, the recognition left little to be desired. Hawthorne never, I believe, made large sums of money by his writings, and the early profits of these charming sketches could not have been considerable; for many of them, indeed, as they

appeared in journals and magazines, he had never been paid at all; but the honour, when once it dawned—and it dawned tolerably early in the author's career—was never thereafter wanting. Hawthorne's countrymen are solidly proud of him, and the tone of Mr. Lathrop's *Study* is in itself sufficient evidence of the manner in which an American story-teller may in some cases look to have his eulogy pronounced.

Hawthorne's early attempt to support himself by his pen appears to have been deliberate; we hear nothing of those experiments in counting-houses or lawyers' offices, of which a permanent invocation to the Muse is often the inconsequent sequel. He began to write, and to try and dispose of his writings; and he remained at Salem apparently only because his family—his mother and his two sisters—lived there. His mother had a house, of which, during the twelve years that elapsed until 1838, he appears to have been an inmate. Mr. Lathrop learned from his surviving sister that, after publishing *Fanshawe*, he produced a group of short stories, entitled *Seven Tales of my Native Land*, and that this lady retained a very favourable recollection of the work, which her brother had given her to read. But it never saw the light; his attempts to get it published were unsuccessful; and at last, in a fit of irritation and despair, the young author burned the manuscript.

There is probably something autobiographic in the striking little tale of *The Devil in Manuscript*. "They have been offered to seventeen publishers," says the hero of that sketch in regard to a pile of his own lucubrations.

"It would make you stare to read their answers. . . . One man publishes nothing but school-books; another has five

novels already under examination; . . . another gentleman is just giving up business, on purpose, I verily believe, to avoid publishing my book. In short, of all the seventeen book-sellers, only one has vouchsafed even to read my tales; and he—a literary dabbler himself, I should judge—has the impertinence to criticise them, proposing what he calls vast improvements, and concluding, after a general sentence of condemnation, with the definitive assurance that he will not be concerned on any terms. . . . But there does seem to be one righteous man among these seventeen unrighteous ones, and he tells me, fairly, that no American publisher will meddle with an American work—seldom if by a known writer, and never if by a new one—unless at the writer's risk."

But though the *Seven Tales* were not printed, Hawthorne proceeded to write others that were; the two collections of the *Twice-Told Tales*, and the *Snow Image*, are gathered from a series of contributions to the local journals and the annuals of that day. To make these three volumes, he picked out the things he thought the best. "Some very small part," he says of what remains, "might yet be rummaged out (but it would not be worth the trouble), among the dingy pages of fifteen or twenty-years-old periodicals, or within the shabby morocco covers of faded *Souvenirs*." These three volumes represent no large amount of literary labour for so long a period, and the author admits that there is little to show "for the thought and industry of that portion of his life." He attributes the paucity of his productions to a "total lack of sympathy at the age when his mind would naturally have been most effervescent." "He had no incitement to literary effort in a reasonable prospect of reputation or profit; nothing but the pleasure itself of composition, an enjoyment not at all amiss in its way, and perhaps essen-

tial to the merit of the work in hand, but which in the long run will hardly keep the chill out of a writer's heart, or the numbness out of his fingers." These words occur in the preface attached in 1851 to the second edition of the *Twice-Told Tales*; *apropos* of which I may say that there is always a charm in Hawthorne's prefaces which makes one grateful for a pretext to quote from them. At this time *The Scarlet Letter* had just made his fame, and the short tales were certain of a large welcome; but the account he gives of the failure of the earlier edition to produce a sensation (it had been published in two volumes, at four years apart), may appear to contradict my assertion that, though he was not recognised immediately, he was recognised betimes. In 1850, when *The Scarlet Letter* appeared, Hawthorne was forty-six years old, and this may certainly seem a long-delayed popularity. On the other hand, it must be remembered that he had not appealed to the world with any great energy. The *Twice-Told Tales*, charming as they are, do not constitute a very massive literary pedestal. As soon as the author, resorting to severer measures, put forth *The Scarlet Letter*, the public ear was touched and charmed, and after that it was held to the end. "Well it might have been!" the reader will exclaim. "But what a grievous pity that the dulness of this same organ should have operated so long as a deterrent, and, by making Hawthorne wait till he was nearly fifty to publish his first novel, have abbreviated by so much his productive career!" The truth is, he cannot have been in any very high degree ambitious; he was not an abundant producer, and there was manifestly a strain of generous indolence in his composition. There was a lovable want of eagerness about him. Let the encouragement offered have been what it might, he had waited till he was

lapsing from middle-life to strike his first noticeable blow ; and during the last ten years of his career he put forth but two complete works, and the fragment of a third.

It is very true, however, that during this early period he seems to have been very glad to do whatever came to his hand. Certain of his tales found their way into one of the annuals of the time, a publication endowed with the brilliant title of *The Boston Token and Atlantic Souvenir*. The editor of this graceful repository was S. G. Goodrich, a gentleman who, I suppose, may be called one of the pioneers of American periodical literature. He is better known to the world as Mr. Peter Parley, a name under which he produced a multitude of popular school-books, story-books, and other attempts to vulgarize human knowledge and adapt it to the infant mind. This enterprising purveyor of literary wares appears, incongruously enough, to have been Hawthorne's earliest protector, if protection is the proper word for the treatment that the young author received from him. Mr. Goodrich induced him, in 1836, to go to Boston to edit a periodical in which he was interested, *The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*. I have never seen the work in question, but Hawthorne's biographer gives a sorry account of it. It was managed by the so-called Bewick Company, which "took its name from Thomas Bewick, the English restorer of the art of wood-engraving, and the magazine was to do his memory honour by his admirable illustrations. But in fact it never did any one honour, nor brought any one profit. It was a penny popular affair, containing condensed information about innumerable subjects, no fiction, and little poetry. The woodcuts were of the crudest and most frightful sort. It passed through the hands of several editors and several publishers. Hawthorne

was engaged at a salary of five hundred dollars a year; but it appears that he got next to nothing, and did not stay in the position long." Hawthorne wrote from Boston in the winter of 1836: "I came here trusting to Goodrich's positive promise to pay me forty-five dollars as soon as I arrived; and he has kept promising from one day to another, till I do not see that he means to pay at all. I have now broke off all intercourse with him, and never think of going near him. . . . I don't feel at all obliged to him about the editorship, for he is a stockholder and director in the Bewick Company, . . . and I defy them to get another to do for a thousand dollars what I do for five hundred."—"I make nothing," he says in another letter, "of writing a history or biography before dinner." Goodrich proposed to him to write a *Universal History* for the use of schools, offering him a hundred dollars for his share in the work. Hawthorne accepted the offer, and took a hand—I know not how large a one—in the job. His biographer has been able to identify a single phrase as our author's. He is speaking of George IV.: "Even when he was quite a young man, this King cared as much about dress as any young coxcomb. He had a great deal of taste in such matters, and it is a pity that he was a King, for he might otherwise have made an excellent tailor." The *Universal History* had a great vogue, and passed through hundreds of editions; but it does not appear that Hawthorne ever received more than his hundred dollars. The writer of these pages vividly remembers making its acquaintance at an early stage of his education—a very fat, stumpy-looking book, bound in boards covered with green paper, and having in the text very small woodcuts of the most primitive sort. He associates it to this day with the names of Sesostris and Semiramis whenever he encounters them, there

having been, he supposes, some account of the conquests of these potentates that would impress itself upon the imagination of a child. At the end of four months Hawthorne had received but twenty dollars—four pounds—for his editorship of the *American Magazine*.

There is something pitiful in this episode, and something really touching in the sight of a delicate and superior genius obliged to concern himself with such paltry undertakings. The simple fact was that for a man attempting at that time in America to live by his pen, there were no larger openings; and to live at all Hawthorne had, as the phrase is, to make himself small. This cost him less, moreover, than it would have cost a more copious and strenuous genius, for his modesty was evidently extreme, and I doubt whether he had any very ardent consciousness of rare talent. He went back to Salem; and from this tranquil standpoint, in the spring of 1837, he watched the first volume of his *Twice-Told Tales* come into the world. He had by this time been living some ten years of his manhood in Salem, and an American commentator may be excused for feeling the desire to construct, from the very scanty material that offers itself, a slight picture of his life there. I have quoted his own allusions to its dulness and blankness, but I confess that these observations serve rather to quicken than to depress my curiosity. A biographer has of necessity a relish for detail; his business is to multiply points of characterisation. Mr. Lathrop tells us that our author "had little communication with even the members of his family. Frequently his meals were brought and left at his locked door, and it was not often that the four inmates of the old Herbert Street mansion met in family circle. He never read his stories aloud to his mother and sisters. . . . It was the custom in this house-

hold for the several members to remain very much by themselves; the three ladies were perhaps nearly as rigorous recluses as himself, and, speaking of the isolation which reigned among them, Hawthorne once said, 'We do not even *live* at our house!' It is added that he was not in the habit of going to church. This is not a lively picture; nor is that other sketch of his daily habits much more exhilarating, in which Mr. Lathrop affirms that though the statement that for several years "he never saw the sun" is entirely an error, yet it is true that he stirred little abroad all day, and "seldom chose to walk in the town except at night." In the dusky hours he took walks of many miles along the coast, or else wandered about the sleeping streets of Salem. These were his pastimes, and these were apparently his most intimate occasions of contact with life. Life, on such occasions, was not very exuberant, as any one will reflect who has been acquainted with the physiognomy of a small New England town after nine o'clock in the evening. Hawthorne, however, was an inveterate observer of small things, and he found a field for fancy among the most trivial accidents. There could be no better example of this happy faculty than the little paper entitled "Night Sketches," included among the *Twice-Told Tales*. This small dissertation is about nothing at all, and to call attention to it is almost to overrate its importance. This fact is equally true, indeed, of a great many of its companions, which give even the most appreciative critic a singular feeling of his own indiscretion—almost of his own cruelty. They are so light, so slight, so tenderly trivial, that simply to mention them is to put them in a false position. The author's claim for them is barely audible, even to the most acute listener. They are things to take or to leave—to enjoy, but not to talk about. Not to read them

would be to do them an injustice (to read them is essentially to relish them), but to bring the machinery of criticism to bear upon them would be to do them a still greater wrong. I must remember, however, that to carry this principle too far would be to endanger the general validity of the present little work—a consummation which it can only be my desire to avert. Therefore it is that I think it permissible to remark that in Hawthorne the whole class of little descriptive effusions directed upon common things, to which these just-mentioned Night Sketches belong, have a greater charm than there is any warrant for in their substance. The charm is made up of the spontaneity, the personal quality, of the fancy that plays through them, its mingled simplicity and subtlety, its purity and its *bonhomie*. The Night Sketches are simply the light, familiar record of a walk under an umbrella, at the end of a long, dull, rainy day, through the sloppy, ill-paved streets of a country town, where the rare gas-lamps twinkle in the large puddles, and the blue jars in the druggist's window shine through the vulgar drizzle. One would say that the inspiration of such a theme could have had no great force, and such doubtless was the case; but out of the Salem puddles, nevertheless, springs, flower-like, a charming and natural piece of prose.

I have said that Hawthorne was an observer of small things, and indeed he appears to have thought nothing too trivial to be suggestive. His Note-Books give us the measure of his perception of common and casual things, and of his habit of converting them into *memoranda*. These Note-Books, by the way—this seems as good a place as any other to say it—are a very singular series of volumes; I doubt whether there is anything exactly corresponding to them in the whole body of literature. They

were published—in six volumes, issued at intervals—some years after Hawthorne's death, and no person attempting to write an account of the romancer could afford to regret that they should have been given to the world. There is a point of view from which this may be regretted; but the attitude of the biographer is to desire as many documents as possible. I am thankful, then, as a biographer, for the Note-Books; but I am obliged to confess that, though I have just re-read them carefully, I am still at a loss to perceive how they came to be written—what was Hawthorne's purpose in carrying on for so many years this minute and often trivial chronicle. For a person desiring information about him at any cost, it is valuable; it sheds a vivid light upon his character, his habits, the nature of his mind. But we find ourselves wondering what was its value to Hawthorne himself. It is in a very partial degree a register of impressions, and in a still smaller sense a record of emotions. Outward objects play much the larger part in it; opinions, convictions, ideas pure and simple, are almost absent. He rarely takes his Note-Book into his confidence, or commits to its pages any reflections that might be adapted for publicity; the simplest way to describe the tone of these extremely objective journals is to say that they read like a series of very pleasant, though rather dullish and decidedly formal, letters, addressed to himself by a man who, having suspicions that they might be opened in the post, should have determined to insert nothing compromising. They contain much that is too futile for things intended for publicity; whereas, on the other hand, as a receptacle of private impressions and opinions, they are curiously cold and empty. They widen, as I have said, our glimpse of Hawthorne's mind (I do not say that they elevate our estimate of it),

but they do so by what they fail to contain, as much as by what we find in them. Our business for the moment, however, is not with the light that they throw upon his intellect, but with the information they offer about his habits and his social circumstances.

I know not at what age he began to keep a diary; the first entries in the American volumes are of the summer of 1835. There is a phrase in the preface to his novel of *Transformation*, which must have lingered in the minds of many Americans who have tried to write novels, and to lay the scene of them in the Western world. "No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land." The perusal of Hawthorne's American Note-Books operates as a practical commentary upon this somewhat ominous text. It does so at least to my own mind; it would be too much, perhaps, to say that the effect would be the same for the usual English reader. An American reads between the lines—he completes the suggestions—he constructs a picture. I think I am not guilty of any gross injustice in saying that the picture he constructs from Hawthorne's American diaries, though by no means without charms of its own, is not, on the whole, an interesting one. It is characterised by an extraordinary blankness—a curious paleness of colour and paucity of detail. Hawthorne, as I have said, has a large and healthy appetite for detail, and one is, therefore, the more struck with the lightness of the diet to which his observation was condemned. For myself, as I turn the pages of his journals, I seem to see the image of the crude and simple society

in which he lived. I use these epithets, of course, not invidiously, but descriptively; if one desire to enter as closely as possible into Hawthorne's situation, one must endeavour to reproduce his circumstances. We are struck with the large number of elements that were absent from them, and the coldness, the thinness, the blankness, to repeat my epithet, present themselves so vividly that our foremost feeling is that of compassion for a romancer looking for subjects in such a field. It takes so many things, as Hawthorne must have felt later in life, when he made the acquaintance of the denser, richer, warmer European spectacle—it takes such an accumulation of history and custom, such a complexity of manners and types, to form a fund of suggestion for a novelist. If Hawthorne had been a young Englishman, or a young Frenchman of the same degree of genius, the same cast of mind, the same habits, his consciousness of the world around him would have been a very different affair; however obscure, however reserved, his own personal life, his sense of the life of his fellow-mortals would have been almost infinitely more various. The negative side of the spectacle on which Hawthorne looked out, in his contemplative saunterings and reveries, might, indeed, with a little ingenuity, be made almost ludicrous; one might enumerate the items of high civilization, as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life, until it should become a wonder to know what was left. No State, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country-houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor ivied ruins; no

cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools—no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class—no Epsom nor Ascot! Some such list as that might be drawn up of the absent things in American life—especially in the American life of forty years ago, the effect of which, upon an English or a French imagination, would probably, as a general thing, be appalling. The natural remark, in the almost lurid light of such an indictment, would be that if these things are left out, everything is left out. The American knows that a good deal remains; what it is that remains—that is his secret, his joke, as one may say. It would be cruel, in this terrible denudation, to deny him the consolation of his natural gift, that “American humour” of which of late years we have heard so much.

But in helping us to measure what remains, our author's Diaries, as I have already intimated, would give comfort rather to persons who might have taken the alarm from the brief sketch I have just attempted of what I have called the negative side of the American social situation, than to those reminding themselves of its fine compensations. Hawthorne's entries are to a great degree accounts of walks in the country, drives in stage-coaches, people he met in taverns. The minuteness of the things that attract his attention, and that he deems worthy of being commemorated, is frequently extreme, and from this fact we get the impression of a general vacancy in the field of vision. “Sunday evening, going by the jail, the setting sun kindled up the windows most cheerfully; as if there were a bright, comfortable light within its darksome stone wall.” “I went yesterday with Monsieur S—— to pick raspberries. He fell through an old log-bridge, thrown

over a hollow; looking back, only his head and shoulders appeared through the rotten logs and among the bushes. A shower coming on, the rapid running of a little bare-footed boy, coming up unheard, and dashing swiftly past us, and showing us the soles of his naked feet as he ran adown the path and up the opposite side." In another place he devotes a page to a description of a dog whom he saw running round after its tail; in still another he remarks, in a paragraph by itself—"The aromatic odor of peat-smoke in the sunny autumnal air is very pleasant." The reader says to himself that when a man turned thirty gives a place in his mind—and his inkstand—to such trifles as these, it is because nothing else of superior importance demands admission. Everything in the Notes indicates a simple, democratic, thinly-composed society; there is no evidence of the writer finding himself in any variety or intimacy of relations with any one or with anything. We find a good deal of warrant for believing that if we add that statement of Mr. Lathrop's about his meals being left at the door of his room, to rural rambles of which an impression of the temporary phases of the local apple-crop were the usual, and an encounter with an organ-grinder, or an eccentric dog, the rarer, outcome, we construct a rough image of our author's daily life during the several years that preceded his marriage. He appears to have read a good deal; and that he must have been familiar with the sources of good English, we see from his charming, expressive, slightly self-conscious, cultivated, but not too cultivated, style. Yet neither in these early volumes of his Note-Books, nor in the later, is there any mention of his reading. There are no literary judgments or impressions—there is almost no allusion to works or to authors. The allusions to individuals of any kind are indeed

much less numerous than one might have expected ; there is little psychology, little description of manners. We are told by Mr. Lathrop that there existed at Salem, during the early part of Hawthorne's life, "a strong circle of wealthy families," which "maintained rigorously the distinctions of class," and whose "entertainments were splendid, their manners magnificent." This is a rather pictorial way of saying that there were a number of people in the place—the commercial and professional aristocracy, as it were—who lived in high comfort and respectability, and who, in their small provincial way, doubtless had pretensions to be exclusive. Into this delectable company Mr. Lathrop intimates that his hero was free to penetrate. It is easy to believe it ; and it would be difficult to perceive why the privilege should have been denied to a young man of genius and culture, who was very good-looking (Hawthorne must have been in these days, judging by his appearance later in life, a strikingly handsome fellow), and whose American pedigree was virtually as long as the longest they could show. But in fact Hawthorne appears to have ignored the good society of his native place almost completely ; no echo of its conversation is to be found in his tales or his journals. Such an echo would possibly not have been especially melodious ; and if we regret the shyness and stiffness, the reserve, the timidity, the suspicion, or whatever it was, that kept him from knowing what there was to be known, it is not because we have any very definite assurance that his gains would have been great. Still, since a beautiful writer was growing up in Salem, it is a pity that he should not have given himself a chance to commemorate some of the types that flourished in the richest soil of the place. Like almost all people who possess in a strong degree the story-telling faculty,

Hawthorne had a democratic strain in his composition, and a relish for the commoner stuff of human nature. Thoroughly American in all ways, he was in none more so than in the vagueness of his sense of social distinctions, and his readiness to forget them if a moral or intellectual sensation were to be gained by it. He liked to fraternise with plain people, to take them on their own terms, and put himself, if possible, into their shoes. His Note-Books, and even his tales, are full of evidence of this easy and natural feeling about all his unconventional fellow-mortals—this imaginative interest and contemplative curiosity; and it sometimes takes the most charming and graceful forms. Commingled as it is with his own subtlety and delicacy, his complete exemption from vulgarity, it is one of the points in his character which his reader comes most to appreciate—that reader I mean for whom he is not, as for some few, a dusky and malarious genius.

But even if he had had personally as many pretensions as he had few, he must, in the nature of things, have been more or less of a consenting democrat, for democracy was the very key-stone of the simple social structure in which he played his part. The air of his journals and his tales alike are full of the genuine democratic feeling. This feeling has by no means passed out of New England life; it still flourishes in perfection in the great stock of the people, especially in rural communities; but it is probable that at the present hour a writer of Hawthorne's general fastidiousness would not express it quite so artlessly. "A shrewd gentlewoman, who kept a tavern in the town," he says, in *Chippings with a Chisel*, "was anxious to obtain two or three gravestones for the deceased members of her family, and to pay for these solemn commodities by taking the sculptor to board." This image of a gentlewoman

keeping a tavern and looking out for boarders, seems, from the point of view to which I allude, not at all incongruous. It will be observed that the lady in question was shrewd; it was probable that she was substantially educated, and of reputable life, and it is certain that she was energetic. These qualities would make it natural to Hawthorne to speak of her as a gentlewoman; the natural tendency in societies where the sense of equality prevails being to take for granted the high level rather than the low. Perhaps the most striking example of the democratic sentiment in all our author's tales, however, is the figure of Uncle Venner, in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Uncle Venner is a poor old man in a brimless hat and patched trousers, who picks up a precarious subsistence by rendering, for a compensation, in the houses and gardens of the good people of Salem, those services that are known in New England as "chores." He carries parcels, splits fire-wood, digs potatoes, collects refuse for the maintenance of his pigs, and looks forward with philosophic equanimity to the time when he shall end his days in the almshouse. But, in spite of the very modest place that he occupies in the social scale, he is received on a footing of familiarity in the household of the far-descended Miss Pyncheon; and when this ancient lady and her companions take the air in the garden of a summer evening, he steps into the estimable circle and mingles the smoke of his pipe with their refined conversation. This, obviously, is rather imaginative — Uncle Venner is a creation with a purpose. He is an original, a natural moralist, a philosopher; and Hawthorne, who knew perfectly what he was about in introducing him — Hawthorne always knew perfectly what he was about — wished to give in his person an example of humorous resignation and of a life reduced to the sim-

plest and homeliest elements, as opposed to the fantastic pretensions of the antiquated heroine of the story. He wished to strike a certain exclusively human and personal note. He knew that for this purpose he was taking a license; but the point is that he felt he was not indulging in any extravagant violation of reality. Giving in a letter, about 1830, an account of a little journey he was making in Connecticut, he says, of the end of a seventeen miles' stage, that "in the evening, however, I went to a Bible-class with a very polite and agreeable gentleman, whom I afterwards discovered to be a strolling tailor of very questionable habits."

Hawthorne appears on various occasions to have absented himself from Salem, and to have wandered somewhat through the New England States. But the only one of these episodes of which there is a considerable account in the Note-Books is a visit that he paid in the summer of 1837 to his old college-mate, Horatio Bridge, who was living upon his father's property in Maine, in company with an eccentric young Frenchman, a teacher of his native tongue, who was looking for pupils among the Northern forests. I have said that there was less psychology in Hawthorne's Journals than might have been looked for; but there is nevertheless a certain amount of it, and nowhere more than in a number of pages relating to this remarkable "Monsieur S." (Hawthorne, intimate as he apparently became with him, always calls him "Monsieur," just as throughout all his Diaries he invariably speaks of all his friends, even the most familiar, as "Mr." He confers the prefix upon the unconventional Thoreau, his fellow-woodsman at Concord, and upon the emancipated brethren at Brook Farm.) These pages are completely occupied with Monsieur S., who was evidently a man of character,

with the full complement of his national vivacity. There is an elaborate effort to analyse the poor young Frenchman's disposition, something conscientious and painstaking, respectful, explicit, almost solemn. These passages are very curious as a reminder of the absence of the off-hand element in the manner in which many Americans, and many New Englanders especially, make up their minds about people whom they meet. This, in turn, is a reminder of something that may be called the importance of the individual in the American world; which is a result of the newness and youthfulness of society, and of the absence of keen competition. The individual counts for more, as it were, and, thanks to the absence of a variety of social types and of settled heads under which he may be easily and conveniently pigeon-holed, he is to a certain extent a wonder and a mystery. An Englishman, a Frenchman—a Frenchman above all—judges quickly, easily, from his own social standpoint, and makes an end of it. He has not that rather chilly and isolated sense of moral responsibility which is apt to visit a New Englander in such processes; and he has the advantage that his standards are fixed by the general consent of the society in which he lives. A Frenchman, in this respect, is particularly happy and comfortable, happy and comfortable to a degree which I think is hardly to be over-estimated; his standards being the most definite in the world, the most easily and promptly appealed to, and the most identical with what happens to be the practice of the French genius itself. The Englishman is not quite so well off, but he is better off than his poor interrogative and tentative cousin beyond the seas. He is blessed with a healthy mistrust of analysis, and hair-splitting is the occupation he most despises. There is always a little of the Dr. Johnson in him, and Dr. Johnson

would have had woefully little patience with that tendency to weigh moonbeams which in Hawthorne was almost as much a quality of race as of genius; albeit that Hawthorne has paid to Boswell's hero (in the chapter on "Lichfield and Uttoxeter," in his volume on England) a tribute of the finest appreciation. American intellectual standards are vague, and Hawthorne's countrymen are apt to hold the scales with a rather uncertain hand and a somewhat agitated conscience.

CHAPTER III.

EARLY WRITINGS.

THE second volume of the *Twice-Told Tales* was published in 1845, in Boston; and at this time a good many of the stories which were afterwards collected into the *Mosses from an Old Manse* had already appeared, chiefly in *The Democratic Review*, a sufficiently flourishing periodical of that period. In mentioning these things, I anticipate; but I touch upon the year 1845 in order to speak of the two collections of *Twice-Told Tales* at once. During the same year Hawthorne edited an interesting volume, the *Journals of an African Cruiser*, by his friend Bridge, who had gone into the Navy and seen something of distant waters. His biographer mentions that even then Hawthorne's name was thought to bespeak attention for a book, and he insists on this fact in contradiction to the idea that his productions had hitherto been as little noticed as his own declaration that he remained "for a good many years the obscurest man of letters in America," might lead one, and has led many people, to suppose. "In this dismal chamber FAME was won," he writes in Salem, in 1836. And we find in the Note-Books (1840) this singularly beautiful and touching passage:—

“Here I sit in my old accustomed chamber, where I used to sit in days gone by. . . . Here I have written many tales—many that have been burned to ashes, many that have doubtless deserved the same fate. This claims to be called a haunted chamber, for thousands upon thousands of visions have appeared to me in it; and some few of them have become visible to the world. If ever I should have a biographer, he ought to make great mention of this chamber in my memoirs, because so much of my lonely youth was wasted here, and here my mind and character were formed; and here I have been glad and hopeful, and here I have been despondent. And here I sat a long, long time, waiting patiently for the world to know me, and sometimes wondering why it did not know me sooner, or whether it would ever know me at all—at least till I were in my grave. And sometimes it seems to me as if I were already in the grave, with only life enough to be chilled and benumbed. But oftener I was happy—at least as happy as I then knew how to be, or was aware of the possibility of being. By and by the world found me out in my lonely chamber, and called me forth—not, indeed, with a loud roar of acclamation, but rather with a still small voice—and forth I went, but found nothing in the world I thought preferable to my solitude till now. . . . And now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break through the viewless bolts and bars; for if I had sooner made my escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough, and been covered with earthly dust, and my heart might have become callous by rude encounters with the multitude. . . . But living in solitude till the fulness of time was come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart. . . . I used to think that I could imagine all passions, all feelings, and states of the heart and mind; but how little did I know? . . . Indeed, we are but shadows: we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream—till the

heart be touched. That touch creates us—then we begin to be—thereby we are beings of reality and inheritors of eternity.”

There is something exquisite in the soft philosophy of this little retrospect, and it helps us to appreciate it to know that the writer had at this time just become engaged to be married to a charming and accomplished person, with whom his union, which took place two years later, was complete and full of happiness. But I quote it more particularly for the evidence it affords that, already in 1840, Hawthorne could speak of the world finding him out and calling him forth, as of an event tolerably well in the past. He had sent the first of the *Twice-Told* series to his old college friend, Longfellow, who had already laid, solidly, the foundation of his great poetic reputation, and at the time of his sending it had written him a letter from which it will be to our purpose to quote a few lines:—

“You tell me you have met with troubles and changes. I know not what these may have been; but I can assure you that trouble is the next best thing to enjoyment, and that there is no fate in the world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows. For the last ten years I have not lived, but only dreamed of living. It may be true that there may have been some unsubstantial pleasures here in the shade, which I might have missed in the sunshine, but you cannot conceive how utterly devoid of satisfaction all my retrospects are. I have laid up no treasure of pleasant remembrances against old age; but there is some comfort in thinking that future years may be more varied, and therefore more tolerable, than the past. You give me more credit than I deserve in supposing that I have led a studious life. I have indeed turned over a good many books, but in so desultory a way that it cannot be called study, nor has it left me

the fruits of study. . . . I have another great difficulty in the lack of materials; for I have seen so little of the world that I have nothing but thin air to concoct my stories of, and it is not easy to give a life-like semblance to such shadowy stuff. Sometimes, through a peephole, I have caught a glimpse of the real world, and the two or three articles in which I have portrayed these glimpses please me better than the others."

It is more particularly for the sake of the concluding lines that I have quoted this passage; for evidently no portrait of Hawthorne at this period is at all exact which fails to insist upon the constant struggle which must have gone on between his shyness and his desire to know something of life; between what may be called his evasive and his inquisitive tendencies. I suppose it is no injustice to Hawthorne to say that, on the whole, his shyness always prevailed; and yet, obviously, the struggle was constantly there. He says of his *Twice-Told Tales*, in the preface, "They are not the talk of a secluded man with his own mind and heart (had it been so they could hardly have failed to be more deeply and permanently valuable,) but his attempts, and very imperfectly successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world." We are speaking here of small things, it must be remembered—of little attempts, little sketches, a little world. But everything is relative, and this smallness of scale must not render less apparent the interesting character of Hawthorne's efforts. As for the *Twice-Told Tales* themselves, they are an old story now; every one knows them a little, and those who admire them particularly have read them a great many times. The writer of this sketch belongs to the latter class, and he has been trying to forget his familiarity with them, and ask himself what impression they would have made upon him at the time they appeared, in the first bloom of their

freshness, and before the particular Hawthorne-quality, as it may be called, had become an established, a recognised and valued, fact. Certainly I am inclined to think, if one had encountered these delicate, dusky flowers in the blossomless garden of American journalism, one would have plucked them with a very tender hand; one would have felt that here was something essentially fresh and new; here, in no extraordinary force or abundance, but in a degree distinctly appreciable, was an original element in literature. When I think of it, I almost envy Hawthorne's earliest readers; the sensation of opening upon *The Great Carbuncle*, *The Seven Vagabonds*, or *The Threefold Destiny* in an American annual of forty years ago, must have been highly agreeable.

Among these shorter things (it is better to speak of the whole collection, including the *Snow Image* and the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, at once) there are three sorts of tales, each one of which has an original stamp. There are, to begin with, the stories of fantasy and allegory—those among which the three I have just mentioned would be numbered, and which, on the whole, are the most original. This is the group to which such little masterpieces as *Malvin's Burial*, *Rappacini's Daughter*, and *Young Goodman Brown* also belong—these two last perhaps representing the highest point that Hawthorne reached in this direction. Then there are the little tales of New England history, which are scarcely less admirable, and of which *The Grey Champion*, *The Maypole of Merry Mount*, and the four beautiful *Legends of the Province House*, as they are called, are the most successful specimens. Lastly come the slender sketches of actual scenes and of the objects and manners about him, by means of which, more particularly, he endeavoured “to open an intercourse with the

world," and which, in spite of their slenderness, have an infinite grace and charm. Among these things *A Rill from the Town Pump*, *The Village Uncle*, *The Toll-Gatherer's Day*, the *Chippings with a Chisel*, may most naturally be mentioned. As we turn over these volumes we feel that the pieces that spring most directly from his fancy constitute, as I have said (putting his four novels aside), his most substantial claim to our attention. It would be a mistake to insist too much upon them; Hawthorne was himself the first to recognise that. "These fitful sketches," he says in the preface to the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, "with so little of external life about them, yet claiming no profundity of purpose—so reserved even while they sometimes seem so frank—often but half in earnest, and never, even when most so, expressing satisfactorily the thoughts which they profess to image—such trifles, I truly feel, afford no solid basis for a literary reputation." This is very becomingly uttered; but it may be said, partly in answer to it, and partly in confirmation, that the valuable element in these things was not what Hawthorne put into them consciously, but what passed into them without his being able to measure it—the element of simple genius, the quality of imagination. This is the real charm of Hawthorne's writing—this purity and spontaneity and naturalness of fancy. For the rest, it is interesting to see how it borrowed a particular colour from the other faculties that lay near it—how the imagination, in this capital son of the old Puritans, reflected the hue of the more purely moral part, of the dusky, overshadowed conscience. The conscience, by no fault of its own, in every genuine offshoot of that sombre lineage, lay under the shadow of the sense of *sin*. This darkening cloud was no essential part of the nature

of the individual; it stood fixed in the general moral heaven under which he grew up and looked at life. It projected from above, from outside, a black patch over his spirit, and it was for him to do what he could with the black patch. There were all sorts of possible ways of dealing with it; they depended upon the personal temperament. Some natures would let it lie as it fell, and contrive to be tolerably comfortable beneath it. Others would groan and sweat and suffer; but the dusky blight would remain, and their lives would be lives of misery. Here and there an individual, irritated beyond endurance, would throw it off in anger, plunging probably into what would be deemed deeper abysses of depravity. Hawthorne's way was the best; for he contrived, by an exquisite process, best known to himself, to transmute this heavy moral burden into the very substance of the imagination, to make it evaporate in the light and charming fumes of artistic production. But Hawthorne, of course, was exceptionally fortunate; he had his genius to help him. Nothing is more curious and interesting than this almost exclusively *imported* character of the sense of sin in Hawthorne's mind; it seems to exist there merely for an artistic or literary purpose. He had ample cognizance of the Puritan conscience; it was his natural heritage; it was reproduced in him; looking into his soul, he found it there. But his relation to it was only, as one may say, intellectual; it was not moral and theological. He played with it, and used it as a pigment; he treated it, as the metaphysicians say, objectively. He was not discomposed, disturbed, haunted by it, in the manner of its usual and regular victims, who had not the little postern door of fancy to slip through, to the other side of the wall. It was, indeed, to his imaginative vision, the great fact of man's nature;

the light element that had been mingled with his own composition always clung to this rugged prominence of moral responsibility, like the mist that hovers about the mountain. It was a necessary condition for a man of Hawthorne's stock that if his imagination should take license to amuse itself, it should at least select this grim precinct of the Puritan morality for its play-ground. He speaks of the dark disapproval with which his old ancestors, in the case of their coming to life, would see him trifling himself away as a story-teller. But how far more darkly would they have frowned could they have understood that he had converted the very principle of their own being into one of his toys!

It will be seen that I am far from being struck with the justice of that view of the author of the *Twice-Told Tales*, which is so happily expressed by the French critic to whom I alluded at an earlier stage of this essay. To speak of Hawthorne, as M. Emile Montégut does, as a *romancier pessimiste*, seems to me very much beside the mark. He is no more a pessimist than an optimist, though he is certainly not much of either. He does not pretend to conclude, or to have a philosophy of human nature; indeed, I should even say that at bottom he does not take human nature as hard as he may seem to do. "His bitterness," says M. Montégut, "is without abatement, and his bad opinion of man is without compensation. . . . His little tales have the air of confessions which the soul makes to itself; they are so many little slaps which the author applies to our face." This, it seems to me, is to exaggerate almost immeasurably the reach of Hawthorne's relish of gloomy subjects. What pleased him in such subjects was their picturesqueness, their rich duskiness of colour, their chiaroscuro; but they were not the expression of

a hopeless, or even of a predominantly melancholy, feeling about the human soul. Such at least is my own impression. He is to a considerable degree ironical—this is part of his charm—part even, one may say, of his brightness; but he is neither bitter nor cynical—he is rarely even what I should call tragical. There have certainly been story-tellers of a gayer and lighter spirit; there have been observers more humorous, more hilarious—though on the whole Hawthorne's observation has a smile in it oftener than may at first appear; but there has rarely been an observer more serene, less agitated by what he sees and less disposed to call things deeply into question. As I have already intimated, his Note-Books are full of this simple and almost childlike serenity. That dusky pre-occupation with the misery of human life and the wickedness of the human heart which such a critic as M. Emile Montégut talks about, is totally absent from them; and if we may suppose a person to have read these Diaries before looking into the tales, we may be sure that such a reader would be greatly surprised to hear the author described as a disappointed, disdainful genius. "This marked love of cases of conscience," says M. Montégut; "this taciturn, scornful cast of mind; this habit of seeing sin everywhere, and hell always gaping open; this dusky gaze bent always upon a damned world, and a nature draped in mourning; these lonely conversations of the imagination with the conscience; this pitiless analysis resulting from a perpetual examination of one's self, and from the tortures of a heart closed before men and open to God—all these elements of the Puritan character have passed into Mr. Hawthorne, or, to speak more justly, have *filtered* into him, through a long succession of generations." This is a very pretty and very vivid account of

Hawthorne, superficially considered; and it is just such a view of the case as would commend itself most easily and most naturally to a hasty critic. It is all true indeed, with a difference; Hawthorne was all that M. Montégut says, *minus* the conviction. The old Puritan moral sense, the consciousness of sin and hell, of the fearful nature of our responsibilities and the savage character of our Taskmaster—these things had been lodged in the mind of a man of Fancy, whose fancy had straightway begun to take liberties and play tricks with them—to judge them (Heaven forgive him!) from the poetic and æsthetic point of view, the point of view of entertainment and irony. This absence of conviction makes the difference; but the difference is great.

Hawthorne was a man of fancy, and I suppose that, in speaking of him, it is inevitable that we should feel ourselves confronted with the familiar problem of the difference between the fancy and the imagination. Of the larger and more potent faculty he certainly possessed a liberal share; no one can read *The House of the Seven Gables* without feeling it to be a deeply imaginative work. But I am often struck, especially in the shorter tales, of which I am now chiefly speaking, with a kind of small ingenuity, a taste for conceits and analogies, which bears more particularly what is called the fanciful stamp. The finer of the shorter tales are redolent of a rich imagination.

“Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of witch-meeting? Be it so, if you will; but, alas, it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown! a stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate, man, did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath-day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen, because an

anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit, with power and fervid eloquence, and with his hand on the open Bible of the sacred truth of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown grow pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, awaking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children, and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbours not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom."

There is imagination in that, and in many another passage that I might quote; but as a general thing I should characterise the more metaphysical of our author's short stories as graceful and felicitous conceits. They seem to me to be qualified in this manner by the very fact that they belong to the province of allegory. Hawthorne, in his metaphysical moods, is nothing if not allegorical, and allegory, to my sense, is quite one of the lighter exercises of the imagination. Many excellent judges, I know, have a great stomach for it; they delight in symbols and correspondences, in seeing a story told as if it were another and a very different story. I frankly confess that I have, as a general thing, but little enjoyment of it, and that it has never seemed to me to be, as it were, a first-rate literary form. It has produced assuredly some first-rate works; and Hawthorne in his younger years had been a great reader and devotee of Bunyan and Spenser, the great masters of allegory. But it is apt to spoil two good

things—a story and a moral, a meaning and a form; and the taste for it is responsible for a large part of the forcible-feeble writing that has been inflicted upon the world. The only cases in which it is endurable is when it is extremely spontaneous, when the analogy presents itself with eager promptitude. When it shows signs of having been groped and fumbled for, the needful illusion is of course absent, and the failure complete. Then the machinery alone is visible, and the end to which it operates becomes a matter of indifference. There was but little literary criticism in the United States at the time Hawthorne's earlier works were published; but among the reviewers Edgar Poe perhaps held the scales the highest. He, at any rate, rattled them loudest, and pretended, more than any one else, to conduct the weighing-process on scientific principles. Very remarkable was this process of Edgar Poe's, and very extraordinary were his principles; but he had the advantage of being a man of genius, and his intelligence was frequently great. His collection of critical sketches of the American writers flourishing in what M. Taine would call his *milieu* and *moment*, is very curious and interesting reading, and it has one quality which ought to keep it from ever being completely forgotten. It is probably the most complete and exquisite specimen of *provincialism* ever prepared for the edification of men. Poe's judgments are pretentious, spiteful, vulgar; but they contain a great deal of sense and discrimination as well, and here and there, sometimes at frequent intervals, we find a phrase of happy insight imbedded in a patch of the most fatuous pedantry. He wrote a chapter upon Hawthorne, and spoke of him, on the whole, very kindly; and his estimate is of sufficient value to make it noticeable that he should express lively disapproval of the large part allotted

to allegory in his tales—in defence of which, he says, “however, or for whatever object employed, there is scarcely one respectable word to be said. . . . The deepest emotion,” he goes on, “aroused within us by the happiest allegory *as* allegory, is a very, *very* imperfectly satisfied sense of the writer’s ingenuity in overcoming a difficulty we should have preferred his not having attempted to overcome. . . . One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction;” and Poe has furthermore the courage to remark that the *Pilgrim’s Progress* is a “ludicrously overrated book.” Certainly, as a general thing, we are struck with the ingenuity and felicity of Hawthorne’s analogies and correspondences; the idea appears to have made itself at home in them easily. Nothing could be better in this respect than *The Snow Image* (a little masterpiece), or *The Great Carbuncle*, or *Doctor Heidegger’s Experiment*, or *Rappacini’s Daughter*. But in such things as *The Birth-Mark* and *The Bosom-Serpent* we are struck with something stiff and mechanical, slightly incongruous, as if the kernel had not assimilated its envelope. But these are matters of light impression, and there would be a want of tact in pretending to discriminate too closely among things which all, in one way or another, have a charm. The charm—the great charm—is that they are glimpses of a great field, of the whole deep mystery of man’s soul and conscience. They are moral, and their interest is moral; they deal with something more than the mere accidents and conventionalities, the surface occurrences of life. The fine thing in Hawthorne is that he cared for the deeper psychology, and that, in his way, he tried to become familiar with it. This natural, yet fanciful, familiarity with it; this air, on the author’s part, of being a confirmed *habitué* of a region of

mysteries and subtleties, constitutes the originality of his tales. And then they have the further merit of seeming, for what they are, to spring up so freely and lightly. The author has all the ease, indeed, of a regular dweller in the moral, psychological realm; he goes to and fro in it, as a man who knows his way. His tread is a light and modest one, but he keeps the key in his pocket.

His little historical stories all seem to me admirable; they are so good that you may re-read them many times. They are not numerous, and they are very short; but they are full of a vivid and delightful sense of the New England past; they have, moreover, the distinction, little tales of a dozen and fifteen pages as they are, of being the only successful attempts at historical fiction that have been made in the United States. Hawthorne was at home in the early New England history; he had thumbed its records and he had breathed its air, in whatever odd receptacles this somewhat pungent compound still lurked. He was fond of it, and he was proud of it, as any New Englander must be, measuring the part of that handful of half-starved fanatics who formed his earliest precursors, in laying the foundations of a mighty empire. Hungry for the picturesque as he always was, and not finding any very copious provision of it around him, he turned back into the two preceding centuries, with the earnest determination that the primitive annals of Massachusetts should at least *appear* picturesque. His fancy, which was always alive, played a little with the somewhat meagre and angular facts of the colonial period, and forthwith converted a great many of them into impressive legends and pictures. There is a little infusion of colour, a little vagueness about certain details, but it is very gracefully and discreetly done, and realities are kept in view sufficiently to make us feel that if we are reading romance,

it is romance that rather supplements than contradicts history. The early annals of New England were not fertile in legend, but Hawthorne laid his hands upon everything that would serve his purpose, and in two or three cases his version of the story has a great deal of beauty. *The Grey Champion* is a sketch of less than eight pages, but the little figures stand up in the tale as stoutly, at the least, as if they were propped up on half-a-dozen chapters by a dryer annalist; and the whole thing has the merit of those cabinet pictures in which the artist has been able to make his persons look the size of life. Hawthorne, to say it again, was not in the least a realist—he was not to my mind enough of one; but there is no genuine lover of the good city of Boston but will feel grateful to him for his courage in attempting to recount the “traditions” of Washington Street, the main thoroughfare of the Puritan capital. The four *Legends of the Province House* are certain shadowy stories which he professes to have gathered in an ancient tavern lurking behind the modern shop fronts of this part of the city. The Province House disappeared some years ago, but while it stood it was pointed to as the residence of the Royal Governors of Massachusetts before the Revolution. I have no recollection of it; but it cannot have been, even from Hawthorne’s account of it—which is as pictorial as he ventures to make it—a very imposing piece of antiquity. The writer’s charming touch, however, throws a rich brown tone over its rather shallow venerableness; and we are beguiled into believing, for instance, at the close of *Howe’s Masquerade* (a story of a strange occurrence at an entertainment given by Sir William Howe, the last of the Royal Governors, during the siege of Boston by Washington), that “superstition, among other legends of this mansion, repeats the wondrous tale

that on the anniversary night of Britain's discomfiture the ghosts of the ancient governors of Massachusetts still glide through the Province House. And last of all comes a figure shrouded in a military cloak, tossing his clenched hands into the air, and stamping his iron-shod boots upon the freestone steps with a semblance of feverish despair, but without the sound of a foot-tramp." Hawthorne had, as regards the two earlier centuries of New England life, that faculty which is called now-a-days the historic consciousness. He never sought to exhibit it on a large scale; he exhibited it, indeed, on a scale so minute that we must not linger too much upon it. His vision of the past was filled with definite images—images none the less definite that they were concerned with events as shadowy as this dramatic passing away of the last of King George's representatives in his long loyal but finally alienated colony.

I have said that Hawthorne had become engaged in about his thirty-fifth year; but he was not married until 1842. Before this event took place he passed through two episodes, which (putting his falling in love aside) were much the most important things that had yet happened to him. They interrupted the painful monotony of his life, and brought the affairs of men within his personal experience. One of these was, moreover, in itself a curious and interesting chapter of observation, and it fructified, in Hawthorne's memory, in one of his best productions. How urgently he needed at this time to be drawn within the circle of social accidents, a little anecdote related by Mr. Lathrop in connection with his first acquaintance with the young lady he was to marry, may serve as an example. This young lady became known to him through her sister, who had first approached him as an admirer of the

Twice-Told Tales (as to the authorship of which she had been so much in the dark as to have attributed it first, conjecturally, to one of the two Miss Hathornes); and the two Miss Peabodys, desiring to see more of the charming writer, caused him to be invited to a species of *conversazione* at the house of one of their friends, at which they themselves took care to be punctual. Several other ladies, however, were as punctual as they, and Hawthorne presently arriving, and seeing a bevy of admirers where he had expected but three or four, fell into a state of agitation, which is vividly described by his biographer. He "stood perfectly motionless, but with the look of a sylvan creature on the point of fleeing away. . . . He was stricken with dismay; his face lost colour and took on a warm paleness, . . . his agitation was very great; he stood by a table, and, taking up some small object that lay upon it, he found his hand trembling so that he was obliged to lay it down." It was desirable, certainly, that something should occur to break the spell of a diffidence that might justly be called morbid. There is another little sentence dropped by Mr. Lathrop in relation to this period of Hawthorne's life, which appears to me worth quoting, though I am by no means sure that it will seem so to the reader. It has a very simple and innocent air, but to a person not without an impression of the early days of "culture" in New England it will be pregnant with historic meaning. The elder Miss Peabody, who afterwards was Hawthorne's sister-in-law, and who acquired later in life a very honourable American fame as a woman of benevolence, of learning, and of literary accomplishment, had invited the Miss Hathornes to come to her house for the evening, and to bring with them their brother, whom she wished to thank for his beautiful tales. "Entirely to her surprise," says

Mr. Lathrop, completing thereby his picture of the attitude of this remarkable family toward society—"entirely to her surprise they came. She herself opened the door, and there, before her, between his sisters, stood a splendidly handsome youth, tall and strong, with no appearance whatever of timidity, but instead an almost fierce determination making his face stern. This was his resource for carrying off the extreme inward tremor which he really felt. His hostess brought out Flaxman's designs for Dante, just received from Professor Felton, of Harvard, and the party made an evening's entertainment out of them." This last sentence is the one I allude to; and were it not for fear of appearing too fanciful, I should say that these few words were, to the initiated mind, an unconscious expression of the lonely frigidity which characterised most attempts at social recreation in the New England world some forty years ago. There was at that time a great desire for culture, a great interest in knowledge, in art, in æsthetics, together with a very scanty supply of the materials for such pursuits. Small things were made to do large service; and there is something even touching in the solemnity of consideration that was bestowed by the emancipated New England conscience upon little wandering books and prints, little echoes and rumours of observation and experience. There flourished at that time in Boston a very remarkable and interesting woman, of whom we shall have more to say, Miss Margaret Fuller by name. This lady was the apostle of culture, of intellectual curiosity; and in the peculiarly interesting account of her life, published in 1852 by Emerson and two other of her friends, there are pages of her letters and diaries which narrate her visits to the Boston Athenæum, and the emotions aroused in her mind by turning over portfolios of

engravings. These emotions were ardent and passionate—could hardly have been more so had she been prostrate with contemplation in the Sistine Chapel or in one of the chambers of the Pitti Palace. The only analogy I can recall to this earnestness of interest in great works of art at a distance from them, is furnished by the great Goethe's elaborate study of plaster-casts and pencil-drawings at Weimar. I mention Margaret Fuller here because a glimpse of her state of mind—her vivacity of desire and poverty of knowledge—helps to define the situation. The situation lives for a moment in those few words of Mr. Lathrop's. The initiated mind, as I have ventured to call it, has a vision of a little unadorned parlour, with the snow-drifts of a Massachusetts winter piled up about its windows, and a group of sensitive and serious people, modest votaries of opportunity, fixing their eyes upon a bookful of Flaxman's attenuated outlines.

At the beginning of the year 1839 he received, through political interest, an appointment as weigher and gauger in the Boston Custom-house. Mr. Van Buren then occupied the Presidency, and it appears that the Democratic party, whose successful candidate he had been, rather took credit for the patronage it had bestowed upon literary men. Hawthorne was a Democrat, and apparently a zealous one; even in later years, after the Whigs had vivified their principles by the adoption of the Republican platform, and by taking up an honest attitude on the question of slavery, his political faith never wavered. His Democratic sympathies were eminently natural, and there would have been an incongruity in his belonging to the other party. He was not only by conviction, but personally and by association, a Democrat. When in later years he found himself in contact with European civilization, he

appears to have become conscious of a good deal of latent radicalism in his disposition; he was oppressed with the burden of antiquity in Europe, and he found himself sighing for lightness and freshness and facility of change. But these things are relative to the point of view, and in his own country Hawthorne cast his lot with the party of conservatism, the party opposed to change and freshness. The people who found something musty and mouldy in his literary productions would have regarded this quite as a matter of course; but we are not obliged to use invidious epithets in describing his political preferences. The sentiment that attached him to the Democracy was a subtle and honourable one, and the author of an attempt to sketch a portrait of him should be the last to complain of this adjustment of his sympathies. It falls much more smoothly into his reader's conception of him than any other would do; and if he had had the perversity to be a Republican, I am afraid our ingenuity would have been considerably taxed in devising a proper explanation of the circumstance. At any rate, the Democrats gave him a small post in the Boston Custom-house, to which an annual salary of \$1,200 was attached, and Hawthorne appears at first to have joyously welcomed the gift. The duties of the office were not very congruous to the genius of a man of fancy; but it had the advantage that it broke the spell of his cursed solitude, as he called it, drew him away from Salem, and threw him, comparatively speaking, into the world. The first volume of the American Note-Books contains some extracts from letters written during his tenure of this modest office, which indicate sufficiently that his occupations cannot have been intrinsically gratifying.

“I have been measuring coal all day,” he writes, during

the winter of 1840, "on board of a black little British schooner, in a dismal dock at the north end of the city. Most of the time I paced the deck to keep myself warm; for the wind (north-east, I believe) blew up through the dock as if it had been the pipe of a pair of bellows. The vessel lying deep between two wharves, there was no more delightful prospect, on the right hand and on the left, than the posts and timbers, half immersed in the water and covered with ice, which the rising and falling of successive tides had left upon them, so that they looked like immense icicles. Across the water, however, not more than half a mile off, appeared the Bunker's Hill Monument, and, what interested me considerably more, a church-steeple, with the dial of a clock upon it, whereby I was enabled to measure the march of the weary hours. Sometimes I descended into the dirty little cabin of the schooner, and warmed myself by a red-hot stove, among biscuit-barrels, pots and kettles, sea-chests, and innumerable lumber of all sorts—my olfactories meanwhile being greatly refreshed with the odour of a pipe, which the captain, or some one of his crew, was smoking. But at last came the sunset, with delicate clouds, and a purple light upon the islands; and I blessed it, because it was the signal of my release."

A worse man than Hawthorne would have measured coal quite as well; and of all the dismal tasks to which an unremunerated imagination has ever had to accommodate itself, I remember none more sordid than the business depicted in the foregoing lines. "I pray," he writes, some weeks later, "that in one year more I may find some way of escaping from this unblest Custom-house; for it is a very grievous thralldom. I do detest all offices; all, at least, that are held on a political tenure, and I want nothing to do with politicians. Their hearts wither away, and die out of their bodies. Their consciences are turned

to india-rubber, or to some substance as black as that, and which will stretch as much. One thing, if no more, I have gained by my Custom-house experience—to know a politician. It is a knowledge which no previous thought or power of sympathy could have taught me; because the animal, or the machine, rather, is not in nature.” A few days later he goes on in the same strain:—

“I do not think it is the doom laid upon me of murdering so many of the brightest hours of the day at the Custom-house that makes such havoc with my wits, for here I am again trying to write worthily, . . . yet with a sense as if all the noblest part of man had been left out of my composition, or had decayed out of it since my nature was given to my own keeping. . . . Never comes any bird of Paradise into that dismal region. A salt or even a coal-ship is ten million times preferable; for there the sky is above me, and the fresh breeze around me; and my thoughts, having hardly anything to do with my occupation, are as free as air. Nevertheless . . . it is only once in a while that the image and desire of a better and happier life makes me feel the iron of my chain; for after all a human spirit may find no insufficiency of food for it, even in the Custom-house. And with such materials as these I do think and feel and learn things that are worth knowing, and which I should not know unless I had learned them there; so that the present position of my life shall not be quite left out of the sum of my real existence. . . . It is good for me, on many accounts, that my life has had this passage in it. I know much more than I did a year ago. I have a stronger sense of power to act as a man among men. I have gained worldly wisdom, and wisdom, also, that is not altogether of this world. And when I quit this earthly career where I am now buried, nothing will cling to me that ought to be left behind. Men will not perceive, I trust, by my look, or the tenor of my thoughts and feelings, that I have been a Custom-house officer.”

He says, writing shortly afterwards, that "when I shall be free again, I will enjoy all things with the fresh simplicity of a child of five years old. I shall grow young again, made all over anew. I will go forth and stand in a summer shower, and all the worldly dust that has collected on me shall be washed away at once, and my heart will be like a bank of fresh flowers for the weary to rest upon."

This forecast of his destiny was sufficiently exact. A year later, in April, 1841, he went to take up his abode in the socialistic community of Brook Farm. Here he found himself among fields and flowers and other natural products, as well as among many products that could not very justly be called natural. He was exposed to summer showers in plenty; and his personal associations were as different as possible from those he had encountered in fiscal circles. He made acquaintance with Transcendentalism and the Transcendentalists.

CHAPTER IV.

BROOK FARM AND CONCORD.

THE history of the little industrial and intellectual association which formed itself at this time in one of the suburbs of Boston has not, to my knowledge, been written; though it is assuredly a curious and interesting chapter in the domestic annals of New England. It would, of course, be easy to overrate the importance of this ingenious attempt of a few speculative persons to improve the outlook of mankind. The experiment came and went very rapidly and quietly, leaving very few traces behind it. It became simply a charming personal reminiscence for the small number of amiable enthusiasts who had had a hand in it. There were degrees of enthusiasm, and I suppose there were degrees of amiability; but a certain generous brightness of hope and freshness of conviction pervaded the whole undertaking, and rendered it, morally speaking, important to an extent of which any heed that the world in general ever gave to it is an insufficient measure. Of course it would be a great mistake to represent the episode of Brook Farm as directly related to the manners and morals of the New England world in general—and in especial to those of the prosperous, opulent, comfortable part of it. The thing was the experiment of a coterie—it was unusual, unfashionable, unsuccessful. It

was, as would then have been said, an amusement of the Transcendentalists — a harmless effusion of Radicalism. The Transcendentalists were not, after all, very numerous, and the Radicals were by no means of the vivid tinge of those of our own day. I have said that the Brook Farm community left no traces behind it that the world in general can appreciate; I should rather say that the only trace is a short novel, of which the principal merits reside in its qualities of difference from the affair itself. *The Blithedale Romance* is the main result of Brook Farm; but *The Blithedale Romance* was, very properly, never recognised by the Brook Farmers as an accurate portrait of their little colony.

Nevertheless, in a society as to which the more frequent complaint is that it is monotonous, that it lacks variety of incident and of type, the episode, our own business with which is simply that it was the cause of Hawthorne's writing an admirable tale, might be welcomed as a picturesque variation. At the same time, if we do not exaggerate its proportions, it may seem to contain a fund of illustration as to that phase of human life with which our author's own history mingled itself. The most graceful account of the origin of Brook Farm is probably to be found in these words of one of the biographers of Margaret Fuller: "In Boston and its vicinity, several friends, for whose character Margaret felt the highest honour, were earnestly considering the possibility of making such industrial, social, and educational arrangements as would simplify economies, combine leisure for study with healthful and honest toil, avert unjust collisions of caste, equalise refinements, awaken generous affections, diffuse courtesy, and sweeten and sanctify life as a whole." The reader will perceive that this was a liberal scheme, and that if the experiment failed, the

greater was the pity. The writer goes on to say that a gentleman, who afterwards distinguished himself in literature (he had begun by being a clergyman), "convinced by his experience in a faithful ministry that the need was urgent for a thorough application of the professed principles of Fraternity to actual relations, was about staking his all of fortune, reputation, and influence in an attempt to organise a joint-stock company at Brook Farm." As Margaret Fuller passes for having suggested to Hawthorne the figure of Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*, and as she is probably, with one exception, the person connected with the affair who, after Hawthorne, offered most of what is called a personality to the world, I may venture to quote a few more passages from her Memoirs—a curious, in some points of view almost a grotesque, and yet, on the whole, as I have said, an extremely interesting book. It was a strange history and a strange destiny, that of this brilliant, restless, and unhappy woman—this ardent New Englander, this impassioned Yankee, who occupied so large a place in the thoughts, the lives, the affections, of an intelligent and appreciative society, and yet left behind her nothing but the memory of a memory. Her function, her reputation, were singular, and not altogether reassuring: she was a talker; she was *the* talker; she was the genius of talk. She had a magnificent, though by no means an unmitigated, egotism; and in some of her utterances it is difficult to say whether pride or humility prevails—as, for instance, when she writes that she feels "that there is plenty of room in the Universe for my faults, and as if I could not spend time in thinking of them when so many things interest me more." She has left the same sort of reputation as a great actress. Some of her writing has extreme beauty, almost all of it has a real interest; but her value, her activity, her sway (I

am not sure that one can say her charm), were personal and practical. She went to Europe, expanded to new desires and interests, and, very poor herself, married an impoverished Italian nobleman. Then, with her husband and child, she embarked to return to her own country, and was lost at sea in a terrible storm, within sight of its coasts. Her tragical death combined with many of the elements of her life to convert her memory into a sort of legend, so that the people who had known her well grew at last to be envied by later comers. Hawthorne does not appear to have been intimate with her; on the contrary, I find such an entry as this in the American Note-Books in 1841: "I was invited to dine at Mr. Bancroft's yesterday, with Miss Margaret Fuller; but Providence had given me some business to do; for which I was very thankful!" It is true that, later, the lady is the subject of one or two allusions of a gentler cast. One of them, indeed, is so pretty as to be worth quoting:—

"After leaving the book at Mr. Emerson's, I returned through the woods, and, entering Sleepy Hollow, I perceived a lady reclining near the path which bends along its verge. It was Margaret herself. She had been there the whole afternoon, meditating or reading, for she had a book in her hand, with some strange title which I did not understand and have forgotten. She said that nobody had broken her solitude, and was just giving utterance to a theory that no inhabitant of Concord ever visited Sleepy Hollow, when we saw a group of people entering the sacred precincts. Most of them followed a path which led them away from us; but an old man passed near us, and smiled to see Margaret reclining on the ground and me standing by her side. He made some remark upon the beauty of the afternoon, and withdrew himself into the shadow of the wood. Then we talked about autumn, and about the pleasures of being lost in the woods, and about

the crows, whose voices Margaret had heard; and about the experiences of early childhood, whose influence remains upon the character after the recollection of them has passed away; and about the sight of mountains from a distance, and the view from their summits; and about other matters of high and low philosophy."

It is safe to assume that Hawthorne could not, on the whole, have had a high relish for the very positive personality of this accomplished and argumentative woman, in whose intellect high noon seemed ever to reign, as twilight did in his own. He must have been struck with the glare of her understanding, and, mentally speaking, have scowled and blinked a good deal in conversation with her. But it is tolerably manifest, nevertheless, that she was, in his imagination, the starting-point of the figure of Zenobia; and Zenobia is, to my sense, his only very definite attempt at the representation of a character. The portrait is full of alteration and embellishment; but it has a greater reality, a greater abundance of detail, than any of his other figures, and the reality was a memory of the lady whom he had encountered in the Roxbury pastoral or among the wood-walks of Concord, with strange books in her hand and eloquent discourse on her lips. *The Blithedale Romance* was written just after her unhappy death, when the reverberation of her talk would lose much of its harshness. In fact, however, very much the same qualities that made Hawthorne a Democrat in politics—his contemplative turn and absence of a keen perception of abuses, his taste for old ideals, and loitering paces, and muffled tones—would operate to keep him out of active sympathy with a woman of the so-called progressive type. We may be sure that in women his taste was conservative.

It seems odd, as his biographer says, "that the least

gregarious of men should have been drawn into a socialistic community ;” but although it is apparent that Hawthorne went to Brook Farm without any great Transcendental fervour, yet he had various good reasons for casting his lot in this would-be happy family. He was as yet unable to marry, but he naturally wished to do so as speedily as possible, and there was a prospect that Brook Farm would prove an economical residence. And then it is only fair to believe that Hawthorne was interested in the experiment ; and that, though he was not a Transcendentalist, an Abolitionist, or a Fourierite, as his companions were in some degree or other likely to be, he was willing, as a generous and unoccupied young man, to lend a hand in any reasonable scheme for helping people to live together on better terms than the common. The Brook Farm scheme was, as such things go, a reasonable one ; it was devised and carried out by shrewd and sober-minded New Englanders, who were careful to place economy first and idealism afterwards, and who were not afflicted with a Gallic passion for completeness of theory. There were no formulas, doctrines, dogmas ; there was no interference whatever with private life or individual habits, and not the faintest adumbration of a rearrangement of that difficult business known as the relations of the sexes. The relations of the sexes were neither more nor less than what they usually are in American life, excellent ; and in such particulars the scheme was thoroughly conservative and irreproachable. Its main characteristic was that each individual concerned in it should do a part of the work necessary for keeping the whole machine going. He could choose his work, and he could live as he liked ; it was hoped, but it was by no means demanded, that he would make himself agreeable, like a gentleman invited to a din-

ner-party. Allowing, however, for everything that was a concession to worldly traditions and to the laxity of man's nature, there must have been in the enterprise a good deal of a certain freshness and purity of spirit, of a certain noble credulity and faith in the perfectibility of man, which it would have been easier to find in Boston in the year 1840, than in London five-and-thirty years later. If that was the era of Transcendentalism, Transcendentalism could only have sprouted in the soil peculiar to the general locality of which I speak—the soil of the old New England morality, gently raked and refreshed by an imported culture. The Transcendentalists read a great deal of French and German, made themselves intimate with George Sand and Goethe, and many other writers; but the strong and deep New England conscience accompanied them on all their intellectual excursions, and there never was a so-called “movement” that embodied itself, on the whole, in fewer eccentricities of conduct, or that borrowed a smaller license in private deportment. Henry Thoreau, a delightful writer, went to live in the woods; but Henry Thoreau was essentially a sylvan personage, and would not have been, however the fashion of his time might have turned, a man about town. The brothers and sisters at Brook Farm ploughed the fields and milked the cows; but I think that an observer from another clime and society would have been much more struck with their spirit of conformity than with their *déréglements*. Their ardour was a moral ardour, and the lightest breath of scandal never rested upon them, or upon any phase of Transcendentalism.

A biographer of Hawthorne might well regret that his hero had not been more mixed up with the reforming and free-thinking class, so that he might find a pretext for writing a chapter upon the state of Boston society

forty years ago. A needful warrant for such regret should be, properly, that the biographer's own personal reminiscences should stretch back to that period and to the persons who animated it. This would be a guarantee of fullness of knowledge and, presumably, of kindness of tone. It is difficult to see, indeed, how the generation of which Hawthorne has given us, in *Blithedale*, a few portraits, should not, at this time of day, be spoken of very tenderly and sympathetically. If irony enter into the allusion, it should be of the lightest and gentlest. Certainly, for a brief and imperfect chronicler of these things, a writer just touching them as he passes, and who has not the advantage of having been a contemporary, there is only one possible tone. The compiler of these pages, though his recollections date only from a later period, has a memory of a certain number of persons who had been intimately connected, as Hawthorne was not, with the agitations of that interesting time. Something of its interest adhered to them still—something of its aroma clung to their garments; there was something about them which seemed to say that when they were young and enthusiastic, they had been initiated into moral mysteries, they had played at a wonderful game. Their usual mark (it is true I can think of exceptions) was that they seemed excellently good. They appeared unstained by the world, unfamiliar with worldly desires and standards, and with those various forms of human depravity which flourish in some high phases of civilization; inclined to simple and democratic ways, destitute of pretensions and affectations, of jealousies, of cynicisms, of snobishness. This little epoch of fermentation has three or four drawbacks for the critics—drawbacks, however, that may be overlooked by a person for whom it has an interest of association. It bore, intellectually, the stamp of provin-

cialism ; it was a beginning without a fruition, a dawn without a noon ; and it produced, with a single exception, no great talents. It produced a great deal of writing, but (always putting Hawthorne aside, as a contemporary but not a sharer) only one writer in whom the world at large has interested itself. The situation was summed up and transfigured in the admirable and exquisite Emerson. He expressed all that it contained, and a good deal more, doubtless, besides ; he was the man of genius of the moment ; he was the Transcendentalist *par excellence*. Emerson expressed, before all things, as was extremely natural at the hour and in the place, the value and importance of the individual, the duty of making the most of one's self, of living by one's own personal light, and carrying out one's own disposition. He reflected with beautiful irony upon the exquisite impudence of those institutions which claim to have appropriated the truth and to dole it out, in proportionate morsels, in exchange for a subscription. He talked about the beauty and dignity of life, and about every one who is born into the world being born to the whole, having an interest and a stake in the whole. He said "all that is clearly due to-day is not to lie," and a great many other things which it would be still easier to present in a ridiculous light. He insisted upon sincerity and independence and spontaneity, upon acting in harmony with one's nature, and not conforming and compromising for the sake of being more comfortable. He urged that a man should await his call, his finding the thing to do which he should really believe in doing, and not be urged, by the world's opinion to do simply the world's work. "If no call should come for years, for centuries, then I know that the want of the Universe is the attestation of faith by my abstinence. . . . If I cannot work, at least I need not lie." The doctrine

of the supremacy of the individual to himself, of his originality, and, as regards his own character, *unique* quality, must have had a great charm for people living in a society in which introspection—thanks to the want of other entertainment—played almost the part of a social resource.

In the United States, in those days, there were no great things to look out at (save forests and rivers); life was not in the least spectacular; society was not brilliant; the country was given up to a great material prosperity, a homely *bourgeois* activity, a diffusion of primary education and the common luxuries. There was, therefore, among the cultivated classes, much relish for the utterances of a writer who would help one to take a picturesque view of one's internal responsibilities, and to find in the landscape of the soul all sorts of fine sunrise and moonlight effects. "Meantime, while the doors of the temple stand open, night and day, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely—it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction but provocation that I can receive from another soul." To make one's self so much more interesting would help to make life interesting, and life was probably, to many of this aspiring congregation, a dream of freedom and fortitude. There were faulty parts in the Emersonian philosophy; but the general tone was magnificent; and I can easily believe that, coming when it did and where it did, it should have been drunk in by a great many fine moral appetites with a sense of intoxication. One envies, even, I will not say the illusions, of that keenly sentient period, but the convictions and interests—the moral passion. One certainly envies the privilege of having heard the finest of Emerson's orations poured forth in their early newness.

They were the most poetical, the most beautiful productions of the American mind, and they were thoroughly local and national. They had a music and a magic, and when one remembers the remarkable charm of the speaker, the beautiful modulation of his utterance, one regrets in especial that one might not have been present on a certain occasion which made a sensation, an era—the delivery of an address to the Divinity School of Harvard University, on a summer evening in 1838. In the light, fresh American air, unthickened and undarkened by customs and institutions established, these things, as the phrase is, told.

Hawthorne appears, like his own Miles Coverdale, to have arrived at Brook Farm in the midst of one of those April snow-storms which, during the New England spring, occasionally diversify the inaction of the vernal process. Miles Coverdale, in *The Blithedale Romance*, is evidently as much Hawthorne as he is any one else in particular. He is, indeed, not very markedly any one, unless it be the spectator, the observer; his chief identity lies in his success in looking at things objectively, and spinning uncommunicated fancies about them. This, indeed, was the part that Hawthorne played socially in the little community at West Roxbury. His biographer describes him as sitting “silently, hour after hour, in the broad, old-fashioned hall of the house, where he could listen almost unseen to the chat and merriment of the young people, himself almost always holding a book before him, but seldom turning the leaves.” He put his hand to the plough, and supported himself and the community, as they were all supposed to do, by his labour; but he contributed little to the hum of voices. Some of his companions, either then or afterwards, took, I believe, rather a gruesome view of his want of articulate enthusiasm, and accused him of coming to

the place as a sort of intellectual vampire, for purely psychological purposes. He sat in a corner, they declared, and watched the inmates when they were off their guard, analysing their characters, and dissecting the amiable ardour, the magnanimous illusions, which he was too cold-blooded to share. In so far as this account of Hawthorne's attitude was a complaint, it was a singularly childish one. If he was at Brook Farm without being of it, this is a very fortunate circumstance from the point of view of posterity, who would have preserved but a slender memory of the affair if our author's fine novel had not kept the topic open. The complaint is, indeed, almost so ungrateful a one as to make us regret that the author's fellow-communists came off so easily. They certainly would not have done so if the author of *Blithedale* had been more of a satirist. Certainly, if Hawthorne was an observer, he was a very harmless one; and when one thinks of the queer specimens of the reforming genus with which he must have been surrounded, one almost wishes that, for our entertainment, he had given his old companions something to complain of in earnest. There is no satire whatever in the *Romance*; the quality is almost conspicuous by its absence. Of portraits there are only two; there is no sketching of odd figures—no reproduction of strange types of radicalism; the human background is left vague. Hawthorne was not a satirist, and if at Brook Farm he was, according to his habit, a good deal of a mild sceptic, his scepticism was exercised much more in the interest of fancy than in that of reality.

There must have been something pleasantly bucolic and pastoral in the habits of the place during the fine New England summer; but we have no retrospective envy of the denizens of Brook Farm in that other season which, as

Hawthorne somewhere says, leaves in those regions "so large a blank—so melancholy a death-spot—in lives so brief that they ought to be all summer-time." "Of a summer night, when the moon was full," says Mr. Lathrop, "they lit no lamps, but sat grouped in the light and shadow, while sundry of the younger men sang old ballads, or joined Tom Moore's songs to operatic airs. On other nights there would be an original essay or poem read aloud, or else a play of Shakspeare, with the parts distributed to different members; and these amusements failing, some interesting discussion was likely to take their place. Occasionally, in the dramatic season, large delegations from the farm would drive into Boston, in carriages and wagons, to the opera or the play. Sometimes, too, the young women sang as they washed the dishes in the Hive; and the youthful yeomen of the society came in and helped them with their work. The men wore blouses of a checked or plaided stuff, belted at the waist, with a broad collar folding down about the throat, and rough straw hats; the women, usually, simple calico gowns and hats." All this sounds delightfully Arcadian and innocent, and it is certain that there was something peculiar to the clime and race in some of the features of such a life; in the free, frank, and stainless companionship of young men and maidens, in the mixture of manual labour and intellectual flights—dish-washing and æsthetics, wood-chopping and philosophy. Wordsworth's "plain living and high thinking" were made actual. Some passages in Margaret Fuller's journals throw plenty of light on this. (It must be premised that she was at Brook Farm as an occasional visitor; not as a labourer in the Hive.)

"All Saturday I was off in the woods. In the evening we

had a general conversation, opened by me, upon Education, in its largest sense, and on what we can do for ourselves and others. I took my usual ground:—The aim is perfection; patience the road. Our lives should be considered as a tendency, an approximation only. . . . Mr. R. spoke admirably on the nature of loyalty. The people showed a good deal of the *sans-culotte* tendency in their manners, throwing themselves on the floor, yawning, and going out when they had heard enough. Yet, as the majority differ with me, to begin with—that being the reason this subject was chosen—they showed, on the whole, more interest and deference than I had expected. As I am accustomed to deference, however, and need it for the boldness and animation which my part requires, I did not speak with as much force as usual. . . . Sunday.—A glorious day; the woods full of perfume; I was out all the morning. In the afternoon Mrs. R. and I had a talk. I said my position would be too uncertain here, as I could not work. — said ‘they would all like to work for a person of genius.’ . . . ‘Yes,’ I told her; ‘but where would be my repose when they were always to be judging whether I was worth it or not? . . . Each day you must prove yourself anew.’ . . . We talked of the principles of the community. I said I had not a right to come, because all the confidence I had in it was an *experiment* worth trying, and that it was part of the great wave of inspired thought. . . . We had valuable discussion on these points. All Monday morning in the woods again. Afternoon, out with the drawing party; I felt the evils of the want of conventional refinement, in the impudence with which one of the girls treated me. She has since thought of it with regret, I notice; and by every day’s observation of me will see that she ought not to have done it. In the evening a husking in the barn . . . a most picturesque scene. . . . I stayed and helped about half an hour, and then took a long walk beneath the stars. Wednesday. . . . In the evening a conversation on Impulse. . . . I defended nature, as I always do;—the spirit ascending

through, not superseding, nature. But in the scale of Sense, Intellect, Spirit, I advocated the claims of Intellect, because those present were rather disposed to postpone them. On the nature of Beauty we had good talk. — seemed in a much more reverent humour than the other night, and enjoyed the large plans of the universe which were unrolled. . . . Saturday. — Well, good-bye, Brook Farm. I know more about this place than I did when I came; but the only way to be qualified for a judge of such an experiment would be to become an active, though unimpassioned, associate in trying it. . . . The girl who was so rude to me stood waiting, with a timid air, to bid me good-bye.”

The young girl in question cannot have been Hawthorne's charming Priscilla; nor yet another young lady, of a most humble spirit, who communicated to Margaret's biographers her recollections of this remarkable woman's visits to Brook Farm; concluding with the assurance that “after a while she seemed to lose sight of my more prominent and disagreeable peculiarities, and treated me with affectionate regard.”

Hawthorne's farewell to the place appears to have been accompanied with some reflections of a cast similar to those indicated by Miss Fuller; in so far, at least, as we may attribute to Hawthorne himself some of the observations that he fathers upon Miles Coverdale. His biographer justly quotes two or three sentences from *The Blithedale Romance*, as striking the note of the author's feeling about the place. “No sagacious man,” says Coverdale, “will long retain his sagacity if he live exclusively among reformers and progressive people, without periodically returning to the settled system of things, to correct himself by a new observation from that old standpoint.” And he remarks elsewhere, that “it struck me as rather odd that

one of the first questions raised, after our separation from the greedy, struggling, self-seeking world, should relate to the possibility of getting the advantage over the outside barbarians in their own field of labour. But to tell the truth, I very soon became sensible that, as regarded society at large, we stood in a position of new hostility rather than new brotherhood." He was doubtless oppressed by the "sultry heat of society," as he calls it in one of the jottings in the Note-Books. "What would a man do if he were compelled to live always in the sultry heat of society, and could never bathe himself in cool solitude?" His biographer relates that one of the other Brook Farmers, wandering afield one summer's day, discovered Hawthorne stretched at his length upon a grassy hill-side, with his hat pulled over his face, and every appearance, in his attitude, of the desire to escape detection. On his asking him whether he had any particular reason for this shyness of posture—"Too much of a party up there!" Hawthorne contented himself with replying, with a nod in the direction of the Hive. He had, nevertheless, for a time looked forward to remaining indefinitely in the community; he meant to marry as soon as possible, and bring his wife there to live. Some sixty pages of the second volume of the American Note-Books are occupied with extracts from his letters to his future wife and from his journal (which appears, however, at this time to have been only intermittent), consisting almost exclusively of descriptions of the simple scenery of the neighbourhood, and of the state of the woods, and fields, and weather. Hawthorne's fondness for all the common things of nature was deep and constant, and there is always something charming in his verbal touch, as we may call it, when he talks to himself about them. "Oh," he breaks out, of an October after-

noon, "the beauty of grassy slopes, and the hollow ways of paths winding between hills, and the intervals between the road and wood-lots, where Summer lingers and sits down, strewing dandelions of gold and blue asters as her parting gifts and memorials!" He was but a single summer at Brook Farm; the rest of his residence had the winter-quality.

But if he returned to solitude, it was henceforth to be, as the French say, a *solitude à deux*. He was married in July, 1842, and betook himself immediately to the ancient village of Concord, near Boston, where he occupied the so-called Manse which has given the title to one of his collections of tales, and upon which this work, in turn, has conferred a permanent distinction. I use the epithets "ancient" and "near" in the foregoing sentence, according to the American measurement of time and distance. Concord is some twenty miles from Boston; and even to-day, upwards of forty years after the date of Hawthorne's removal thither, it is a very fresh and well-preserved looking town. It had already a local history when, a hundred years ago, the larger current of human affairs flowed for a moment around it. Concord has the honour of being the first spot in which blood was shed in the war of the Revolution; here occurred the first exchange of musket-shots between the King's troops and the American insurgents. Here—as Emerson says in the little hymn which he contributed, in 1836, to the dedication of a small monument commemorating this circumstance—

"Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world."

The battle was a small one, and the farmers were not destined, individually, to emerge from obscurity; but the mem-

ory of these things has kept the reputation of Concord green, and it has been watered, moreover, so to speak, by the life-long presence there of one of the most honoured of American men of letters—the poet from whom I just quoted two lines. Concord is, indeed, in itself decidedly verdant, and is an excellent specimen of a New England village of the riper sort. At the time of Hawthorne's first going there, it must have been an even better specimen than to-day—more homogeneous, more indigenous, more absolutely democratic. Forty years ago the tide of foreign immigration had scarcely begun to break upon the rural strongholds of the New England race; it had at most begun to splash them with the salt Hibernian spray. It is very possible, however, that at this period there was not an Irishman in Concord; the place would have been a village community operating in excellent conditions. Such a village community was not the least honourable item in the sum of New England civilisation. Its spreading elms and plain white houses, its generous summers and ponderous winters, its immediate background of promiscuous field and forest, would have been part of the composition. For the rest, there were the selectmen and the town-meetings, the town-schools and the self-governing spirit, the rigid morality, the friendly and familiar manners, the perfect competence of the little society to manage its affairs itself. In the delightful introduction to the *Mosses*, Hawthorne has given an account of his dwelling, of his simple occupations and recreations, and of some of the characteristics of the place. The Manse is a large, square wooden house, to the surface of which—even in the dry New England air, so unfriendly to mosses, and lichens, and weather-stains, and the other elements of a picturesque complexion—a hundred and fifty years of exposure have imparted a kind of tone,

standing just above the slow-flowing Concord river, and approached by a short avenue of over-arching trees. It had been the dwelling-place of generations of Presbyterian ministers, ancestors of the celebrated Emerson, who had himself spent his early manhood, and written some of his most beautiful essays there. "He used," as Hawthorne says, "to watch the Assyrian dawn, and Paphian sunset and moonrise, from the summit of our eastern hill." From its clerical occupants the place had inherited a mild mustiness of theological association—a vague reverberation of old Calvinistic sermons, which served to deepen its extramundane and somnolent quality. The three years that Hawthorne passed here were, I should suppose, among the happiest of his life. The future was, indeed, not in any special manner assured; but the present was sufficiently genial. In the American Note-Books there is a charming passage (too long to quote) descriptive of the entertainment the new couple found in renovating and re-furnishing the old parsonage, which, at the time of their going into it, was given up to ghosts and cobwebs. Of the little drawing-room, which had been most completely reclaimed, he writes that "the shade of our departed host will never haunt it; for its aspect has been as completely changed as the scenery of a theatre. Probably the ghost gave one peep into it, uttered a groan, and vanished forever." This departed host was a certain Doctor Ripley, a venerable scholar, who left behind him a reputation of learning and sanctity which was reproduced in one of the ladies of his family, long the most distinguished woman in the little Concord circle. Doctor Ripley's predecessor had been, I believe, the last of the line of the Emerson ministers—an old gentleman who, in the earlier years of his pastorate, stood at the window of his study (the same in which Haw-

thorne handled a more irresponsible quill), watching, with his hands under his long coat-tails, the progress of the Concord fight. It is not by any means related, however, I should add, that he waited for the conclusion to make up his mind which was the righteous cause.

Hawthorne had a little society (as much, we may infer, as he desired), and it was excellent in quality. But the pages in the Note-Books which relate to his life at the Manse, and the introduction to the *Mosses*, make more of his relations with vegetable nature, and of his customary contemplation of the incidents of wood-path and way-side, than of the human elements of the scene; though these also are gracefully touched upon. These pages treat largely of the pleasures of a kitchen-garden, of the beauty of summer-squashes, and of the mysteries of apple-raising. With the wholesome aroma of apples (as is, indeed, almost necessarily the case in any realistic record of New England rural life) they are especially pervaded; and with many other homely and domestic emanations; all of which derive a sweetness from the medium of our author's colloquial style. Hawthorne was silent with his lips; but he talked with his pen. The tone of his writing is often that of charming talk—ingenious, fanciful, slow-flowing, with all the lightness of gossip, and none of its vulgarity. In the preface to the tales written at the Manse he talks of many things, and just touches upon some of the members of his circle—especially upon that odd genius, his fellow-villager, Henry Thoreau. I said, a little way back, that the New England Transcendental movement had suffered, in the estimation of the world at large, from not having (putting Emerson aside) produced any superior talents. But any reference to it would be ungenerous which should omit to pay a tribute, in passing, to the author of *Walden*.

Whatever question there may be of his talent, there can be none, I think, of his genius. It was a slim and crooked one, but it was eminently personal. He was imperfect, unfinished, inartistic; he was worse than provincial—he was parochial; it is only at his best that he is readable. But at his best he has an extreme natural charm, and he must always be mentioned after those Americans—Emerson, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Lowell, Motley—who have written originally. He was Emerson's independent moral man made flesh—living for the ages, and not for Saturday and Sunday; for the Universe, and not for Concord. In fact, however, Thoreau lived for Concord very effectually; and by his remarkable genius for the observation of the phenomena of woods and streams, of plants and trees, and beasts and fishes, and for flinging a kind of spiritual interest over these things, he did more than he perhaps intended towards consolidating the fame of his accidental human sojourn. He was as shy and ungregarious as Hawthorne; but he and the latter appear to have been sociably disposed towards each other, and there are some charming touches in the preface to the *Mosses* in regard to the hours they spent in boating together on the large, quiet Concord river. Thoreau was a great voyager, in a canoe which he had constructed himself, and which he eventually made over to Hawthorne, and as expert in the use of the paddle as the Red men who had once haunted the same silent stream. The most frequent of Hawthorne's companions on these excursions appears, however, to have been a local celebrity—as well as Thoreau a high Transcendentalist—Mr. Ellery Channing, whom I may mention, since he is mentioned very explicitly in the preface to the *Mosses*, and also because no account of the little Concord world would be complete which should omit him. He was the

son of the distinguished Unitarian moralist, and, I believe, the intimate friend of Thoreau, whom he resembled in having produced literary compositions more esteemed by the few than by the many. He and Hawthorne were both fishermen, and the two used to set themselves afloat in the summer afternoons. "Strange and happy times were those," exclaims the more distinguished of the two writers, "when we cast aside all irksome forms and strait-laced habitudes, and delivered ourselves up to the free air, to live like the Indians or any less conventional race, during one bright semicircle of the sun. Rowing our boat against the current, between wide meadows, we turned aside into the Assabeth. A more lovely stream than this, for a mile above its junction with the Concord, has never flowed on earth—nowhere, indeed, except to lave the interior regions of a poet's imagination. . . . It comes flowing softly through the midmost privacy and deepest heart of a wood which whispers it to be quiet; while the stream whispers back again from its sedgy borders, as if river and wood were hushing one another to sleep. Yes; the river sleeps along its course and dreams of the sky and the clustering foliage. . . ." While Hawthorne was looking at these beautiful things, or, for that matter, was writing them, he was well out of the way of a certain class of visitants whom he alludes to in one of the closing passages of this long Introduction. "Never was a poor little country village infested with such a variety of queer, strangely-dressed, oddly-behaved mortals, most of whom took upon themselves to be important agents of the world's destiny, yet were simply bores of a very intense character." "These hobgoblins of flesh and blood," he says, in a preceding paragraph, "were attracted thither by the wide-spreading influence of a great original thinker who had his earth-

ly abode at the opposite extremity of our village. . . . People that had lighted on a new thought, or a thought they fancied new, came to Emerson, as the finder of a glittering gem hastens to a lapidary, to ascertain its quality and value;" and Hawthorne enumerates some of the categories of pilgrims to the shrine of the mystic counsellor, who as a general thing was probably far from abounding in their own sense (when this sense was perverted), but gave them a due measure of plain practical advice. The whole passage is interesting, and it suggests that little Concord had not been ill-treated by the fates—with "a great original thinker" at one end of the village, an exquisite teller of tales at the other, and the rows of New England elms between. It contains, moreover, an admirable sentence about Hawthorne's pilgrim-haunted neighbour, with whom, "being happy," as he says, and feeling, therefore, "as if there were no question to be put," he was not in metaphysical communion. "It was good, nevertheless, to meet him in the wood-paths, or sometimes in our avenue, with that pure intellectual gleam diffused about his presence, like the garment of a shining one; and he so quiet, so simple, so without pretension, encountering each man alive as if expecting to receive more than he could impart!" One may without indiscretion risk the surmise that Hawthorne's perception of the "shining" element in his distinguished friend was more intense than his friend's appreciation of whatever luminous property might reside within the somewhat dusky envelope of our hero's identity as a collector of "mosses." Emerson, as a sort of spiritual sun-worshipper, could have attached but a moderate value to Hawthorne's cat-like faculty of seeing in the dark.

"As to the daily course of our life," the latter writes,

in the spring of 1843, "I have written with pretty commendable diligence, averaging from two to four hours a day; and the result is seen in various magazines. I might have written more if it had seemed worth while, but I was content to earn only so much gold as might suffice for our immediate wants, having prospect of official station and emolument which would do away with the necessity of writing for bread. These prospects have not yet had their fulfilment; and we are well content to wait, for an office would inevitably remove us from our present happy home—at least from an outward home; for there is an inner one that will accompany us wherever we go. Meantime, the magazine people do not pay their debts; so that we taste some of the inconveniences of poverty. It is an annoyance, not a trouble." And he goes on to give some account of his usual habits. (The passage is from his Journal, and the account is given to himself, as it were, with that odd, unfamiliar explicitness which marks the tone of this record throughout.) "Every day I trudge through snow and slush to the village, look into the post-office, and spend an hour at the reading-room; and then return home, generally without having spoken a word to any human being. . . . In the way of exercise I saw and split wood, and physically I was never in a better condition than now." He adds a mention of an absence he had lately made. "I went alone to Salem, where I resumed all my bachelor habits for nearly a fortnight, leading the same life in which ten years of my youth flitted away like a dream. But how much changed was I! At last I had got hold of a reality which never could be taken from me. It was good thus to get apart from my happiness for the sake of contemplating it."

These compositions, which were so unpunctually paid

for, appeared in the *Democratic Review*, a periodical published at Washington, and having, as our author's biographer says, "considerable pretensions to a national character." It is to be regretted that the practice of keeping its creditors waiting should, on the part of the magazine in question, have been thought compatible with these pretensions. The foregoing lines are a description of a very monotonous but a very contented life, and Mr. Lathrop justly remarks upon the dissonance of tone of the tales Hawthorne produced under these happy circumstances. It is, indeed, not a little of an anomaly. The episode of the Manse was one of the most agreeable he had known, and yet the best of the *Mosses* (though not the greater number of them) are singularly dismal compositions. They are redolent of M. Montégut's pessimism. "The reality of sin, the pervasiveness of evil," says Mr. Lathrop, "had been but slightly insisted upon in the earlier tales: in this series the idea bursts up like a long-buried fire, with earth-shaking strength, and the pits of hell seem yawning beneath us." This is very true (allowing for Mr. Lathrop's rather too emphatic way of putting it); but the anomaly is, I think, on the whole, only superficial. Our writer's imagination, as has been abundantly conceded, was a gloomy one; the old Puritan sense of sin, of penalties to be paid, of the darkness and wickedness of life, had, as I have already suggested, passed into it. It had not passed into the parts of Hawthorne's nature corresponding to those occupied by the same horrible vision of things in his ancestors; but it had still been determined to claim this later comer as its own, and since his heart and his happiness were to escape, it insisted on setting its mark upon his genius—upon his most beautiful organ, his admirable fancy. It may be said that when his fancy was

strongest and keenest, when it was most itself, then the dark Puritan tinge showed in it most richly; and there cannot be a better proof that he was not the man of a sombre *parti-pris* whom M. Montégut describes, than the fact that these duskiest flowers of his invention sprang straight from the soil of his happiest days. This surely indicates that there was but little direct connection between the products of his fancy and the state of his affections. When he was lightest at heart, he was most creative; and when he was most creative, the moral picturesqueness of the old secret of mankind in general and of the Puritans in particular, most appealed to him—the secret that we are really not by any means so good as a well-regulated society requires us to appear. It is not too much to say, even, that the very condition of production of some of these unamiable tales would be that they should be superficial, and, as it were, insincere. The magnificent little romance of *Young Goodman Brown*, for instance, evidently means nothing as regards Hawthorne's own state of mind, his conviction of human depravity and his consequent melancholy; for the simple reason that, if it meant anything, it would mean too much. Mr. Lathrop speaks of it as a "terrible and lurid parable;" but this, it seems to me, is just what it is not. It is not a parable, but a picture, which is a very different thing. What does M. Montégut make, one would ask, from the point of view of Hawthorne's pessimism, of the singularly objective and unpreoccupied tone of the Introduction to the *Old Manse*, in which the author speaks from himself, and in which the cry of metaphysical despair is not even faintly sounded?

We have seen that when he went into the village he often came home without having spoken a word to a human

being. There is a touching entry made a little later, bearing upon his mild taciturnity. "A cloudy veil stretches across the abyss of my nature. I have, however, no love of secrecy and darkness. I am glad to think that God sees through my heart, and if any angel has power to penetrate into it, he is welcome to know everything that is there. Yes, and so may any mortal who is capable of full sympathy, and therefore worthy to come into my depths. But he must find his own way there; I can neither guide nor enlighten him." It must be acknowledged, however, that if he was not able to open the gate of conversation, it was sometimes because he was disposed to slide the bolt himself. "I had a purpose," he writes, shortly before the entry last quoted, "if circumstances would permit, of passing the whole term of my wife's absence without speaking a word to any human being." He beguiled these incommunicative periods by studying German, in Tieck and Bürger, without apparently making much progress; also in reading French, in Voltaire and Rabelais. "Just now," he writes, one October noon, "I heard a sharp tapping at the window of my study, and, looking up from my book (a volume of Rabelais), behold, the head of a little bird, who seemed to demand admittance." It was a quiet life, of course, in which these diminutive incidents seemed noteworthy; and what is noteworthy here to the observer of Hawthorne's contemplative simplicity, is the fact that, though he finds a good deal to say about the little bird (he devotes several lines more to it), he makes no remark upon Rabelais. He had other visitors than little birds, however, and their demands were also not Rabelaisian. Thoreau comes to see him, and they talk "upon the spiritual advantages of change of place, and upon the *Dial*, and upon Mr. Alcott, and other kindred or concatenated

subjects." Mr. Alcott was an arch-transcendentalist, living in Concord, and the *Dial* was a periodical to which the illuminated spirits of Boston and its neighbourhood used to contribute. Another visitor comes and talks "of Margaret Fuller, who, he says, has risen perceptibly into a higher state since their last meeting." There is probably a great deal of Concord five-and-thirty years ago in that little sentence!

CHAPTER V.

THE THREE AMERICAN NOVELS.

THE prospect of official station and emolument which Hawthorne mentions in one of those paragraphs from his Journals which I have just quoted, as having offered itself and then passed away, was at last, in the event, confirmed by his receiving from the administration of President Polk the gift of a place in the Custom-house of his native town. The office was a modest one, and "official station" may perhaps appear a magniloquent formula for the functions sketched in the admirable Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne's duties were those of Surveyor of the port of Salem, and they had a salary attached, which was the important part; as his biographer tells us that he had received almost nothing for the contributions to the *Democratic Review*. He bade farewell to his ex-parsonage, and went back to Salem in 1846, and the immediate effect of his ameliorated fortune was to make him stop writing. None of his Journals of the period, from his going to Salem to 1850, have been published; from which I infer that he even ceased to journalise. *The Scarlet Letter* was not written till 1849. In the delightful prologue to that work, entitled *The Custom-house*, he embodies some of the impressions gathered dur-

ing these years of comparative leisure (I say of leisure, because he does not intimate in this sketch of his occupations that his duties were onerous). He intimates, however, that they were not interesting, and that it was a very good thing for him, mentally and morally, when his term of service expired—or rather when he was removed from office by the operation of that wonderful “rotatory” system which his countrymen had invented for the administration of their affairs. This sketch of the Custom-house is, as simple writing, one of the most perfect of Hawthorne’s compositions, and one of the most gracefully and humorously autobiographic. It would be interesting to examine it in detail, but I prefer to use my space for making some remarks upon the work which was the ultimate result of this period of Hawthorne’s residence in his native town; and I shall, for convenience’ sake, say directly afterwards what I have to say about the two companions of *The Scarlet Letter*—*The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Blithedale Romance*. I quoted some passages from the prologue to the first of these novels in the early pages of this essay. There is another passage, however, which bears particularly upon this phase of Hawthorne’s career, and which is so happily expressed as to make it a pleasure to transcribe it—the passage in which he says that “for myself, during the whole of my Custom-house experience, moonlight and sunshine, and the glow of the fire-light, were just alike in my regard, and neither of them was of one whit more avail than the twinkle of a tallow-candle. An entire class of susceptibilities, and a gift connected with them—of no great richness or value, but the best I had—was gone from me.” He goes on to say that he believes that he might have done something if he could have made up his mind to convert the very substance of

the commonplace that surrounded him into matter of literature.

"I might, for instance, have contented myself with writing out the narratives of a veteran shipmaster, one of the inspectors, whom I should be most ungrateful not to mention; since scarcely a day passed that he did not stir me to laughter and admiration by his marvellous gift as a story-teller. . . . Or I might readily have found a more serious task. It was a folly, with the materiality of this daily life pressing so intrusively upon me, to attempt to fling myself back into another age; or to insist on creating a semblance of a world out of airy matter. . . . The wiser effort would have been, to diffuse thought and imagination through the opaque substance of to-day, and thus make it a bright transparency. . . . to seek resolutely the true and indestructible value that lay hidden in the petty and wearisome incidents and ordinary characters with which I was now conversant. The fault was mine. The page of life that was spread out before me was dull and commonplace, only because I had not fathomed its deeper import. A better book than I shall ever write was there. . . . These perceptions came too late. . . . I had ceased to be a writer of tolerably poor tales and essays, and had become a tolerably good Surveyor of the Customs. That was all. But, nevertheless, it is anything but agreeable to be haunted by a suspicion that one's intellect is dwindling away, or exhaling, without your consciousness, like ether out of phial; so that at every glance you find a smaller and less volatile residuum."

As, however, it was with what was left of his intellect after three years' evaporation, that Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter*, there is little reason to complain of the injury he suffered in his Surveyorship.

His publisher, Mr. Fields, in a volume entitled *Yesterdays with Authors*, has related the circumstances in which

Hawthorne's masterpiece came into the world. "In the winter of 1849, after he had been ejected from the Custom-house, I went down to Salem to see him and inquire after his health, for we heard he had been suffering from illness. He was then living in a modest wooden house. . . . I found him alone in a chamber over the sitting-room of the dwelling, and as the day was cold he was hovering near a stove. We fell into talk about his future prospects, and he was, as I feared I should find him, in a very desponding mood." His visitor urged him to bethink himself of publishing something, and Hawthorne replied by calling his attention to the small popularity his published productions had yet acquired, and declaring he had done nothing, and had no spirit for doing anything. The narrator of the incident urged upon him the necessity of a more hopeful view of his situation, and proceeded to take leave. He had not reached the street, however, when Hawthorne hurried to overtake him, and, placing a roll of MS. in his hand, bade him take it to Boston, read it, and pronounce upon it. "It is either very good or very bad," said the author; "I don't know which." "On my way back to Boston," says Mr. Fields, "I read the germ of *The Scarlet Letter*; before I slept that night I wrote him a note all aglow with admiration of the marvellous story he had put into my hands, and told him that I would come again to Salem the next day and arrange for its publication. I went on in such an amazing state of excitement, when we met again in the little house, that he would not believe I was really in earnest. He seemed to think I was beside myself, and laughed sadly at my enthusiasm." Hawthorne, however, went on with the book and finished it, but it appeared only a year later. His biographer quotes a passage from a letter which he

wrote in February, 1850, to his friend Horatio Bridge. "I finished my book only yesterday; one end being in the press at Boston, while the other was in my head here at Salem; so that, as you see, my story is at least fourteen miles long. . . . My book, the publisher tells me, will not be out before April. He speaks of it in tremendous terms of approbation; so does Mrs. Hawthorne, to whom I read the conclusion last night. It broke her heart, and sent her to bed with a grievous headache—which I look upon as a triumphant success. Judging from the effect upon her and the publisher, I may calculate on what bowlers call a ten-strike. But I don't make any such calculation." And Mr. Lathrop calls attention, in regard to this passage, to an allusion in the English Note-Books (September 14, 1855). "Speaking of Thackeray, I cannot but wonder at his coolness in respect to his own pathos, and compare it to my own emotions when I read the last scene of *The Scarlet Letter* to my wife, just after writing it—tried to read it, rather, for my voice swelled and heaved as if I were tossed up and down on an ocean as it subsides after a storm. But I was in a very nervous state then, having gone through a great diversity of emotion while writing it, for many months."

The work has the tone of the circumstances in which it was produced. If Hawthorne was in a sombre mood, and if his future was painfully vague, *The Scarlet Letter* contains little enough of gaiety or of hopefulness. It is densely dark, with a single spot of vivid colour in it; and it will probably long remain the most consistently gloomy of English novels of the first order. But I just now called it the author's masterpiece, and I imagine it will continue to be, for other generations than ours, his most substantial title to fame. The subject had probably lain a long time

in his mind, as his subjects were apt to do; so that he appears completely to possess it, to know it and feel it. It is simpler and more complete than his other novels; it achieves more perfectly what it attempts, and it has about it that charm, very hard to express, which we find in an artist's work the first time he has touched his highest mark—a sort of straightness and naturalness of execution, an unconsciousness of his public, and freshness of interest in his theme. It was a great success, and he immediately found himself famous. The writer of these lines, who was a child at the time, remembers dimly the sensation the book produced, and the little shudder with which people alluded to it, as if a peculiar horror were mixed with its attractions. He was too young to read it himself; but its title, upon which he fixed his eyes as the book lay upon the table, had a mysterious charm. He had a vague belief, indeed, that the “letter” in question was one of the documents that come by the post, and it was a source of perpetual wonderment to him that it should be of such an unaccustomed hue. Of course it was difficult to explain to a child the significance of poor Hester Prynne's blood-coloured *A*. But the mystery was at last partly dispelled by his being taken to see a collection of pictures (the annual exhibition of the National Academy), where he encountered a representation of a pale, handsome woman, in a quaint black dress and a white coif, holding between her knees an elfish-looking little girl, fantastically dressed, and crowned with flowers. Embroidered on the woman's breast was a great crimson *A*, over which the child's fingers, as she glanced strangely out of the picture, were maliciously playing. I was told that this was Hester Prynne and little Pearl, and that when I grew older I might read their interesting history. But

the picture remained vividly imprinted on my mind; I had been vaguely frightened and made uneasy by it; and when, years afterwards, I first read the novel, I seemed to myself to have read it before, and to be familiar with its two strange heroines. I mention this incident simply as an indication of the degree to which the success of *The Scarlet Letter* had made the book what is called an actuality. Hawthorne himself was very modest about it; he wrote to his publisher, when there was a question of his undertaking another novel, that what had given the history of Hester Prynne its "vogue" was simply the introductory chapter. In fact, the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* was in the United States a literary event of the first importance. The book was the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in the country. There was a consciousness of this in the welcome that was given it—a satisfaction in the idea of America having produced a novel that belonged to literature, and to the forefront of it. Something might at last be sent to Europe as exquisite in quality as anything that had been received, and the best of it was that the thing was absolutely American; it belonged to the soil, to the air; it came out of the very heart of New England.

It is beautiful, admirable, extraordinary; it has in the highest degree that merit which I have spoken of as the mark of Hawthorne's best things—an indefinable purity and lightness of conception, a quality which in a work of art affects one in the same way as the absence of grossness does in a human being. His fancy, as I just now said, had evidently brooded over the subject for a long time; the situation to be represented had disclosed itself to him in all its phases. When I say in all its phases, the sentence demands modification; for it is to be remembered

that if Hawthorne laid his hand upon the well-worn theme, upon the familiar combination of the wife, the lover, and the husband, it was, after all, but to one period of the history of these three persons that he attached himself. The situation is the situation after the woman's fault has been committed, and the current of expiation and repentance has set in. In spite of the relation between Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, no story of love was surely ever less of a "love-story." To Hawthorne's imagination the fact that these two persons had loved each other too well was of an interest comparatively vulgar; what appealed to him was the idea of their moral situation in the long years that were to follow. The story, indeed, is in a secondary degree that of Hester Prynne; she becomes, really, after the first scene, an accessory figure; it is not upon her the *dénoûment* depends. It is upon her guilty lover that the author projects most frequently the cold, thin rays of his fitfully-moving lantern, which makes here and there a little luminous circle, on the edge of which hovers the livid and sinister figure of the injured and retributive husband. The story goes on, for the most part, between the lover and the husband—the tormented young Puritan minister, who carries the secret of his own lapse from pastoral purity locked up beneath an exterior that commends itself to the reverence of his flock, while he sees the softer partner of his guilt standing in the full glare of exposure and humbling herself to the misery of atonement—between this more wretched and pitiable culprit, to whom dishonour would come as a comfort and the pillory as a relief, and the older, keener, wiser man, who, to obtain satisfaction for the wrong he has suffered, devises the infernally ingenious plan of conjoining himself with his wronger, living with him, living upon him; and while he pretends to

minister to his hidden ailment and to sympathise with his pain, revels in his unsuspected knowledge of these things, and stimulates them by malignant arts. The attitude of Roger Chillingworth, and the means he takes to compensate himself—these are the highly original elements in the situation that Hawthorne so ingeniously treats. None of his works are so impregnated with that after-sense of the old Puritan consciousness of life to which allusion has so often been made. If, as M. Montégut says, the qualities of his ancestors *filtered* down through generations into his composition, *The Scarlet Letter* was, as it were, the vessel that gathered up the last of the precious drops. And I say this not because the story happens to be of so-called historical cast, to be told of the early days of Massachusetts, and of people in steeple-crowned hats and sad-coloured garments. The historical colouring is rather weak than otherwise; there is little elaboration of detail, of the modern realism of research; and the author has made no great point of causing his figures to speak the English of their period. Nevertheless, the book is full of the moral presence of the race that invented Hester's penance—diluted and complicated with other things, but still perfectly recognisable. Puritanism, in a word, is there, not only objectively, as Hawthorne tried to place it there, but subjectively as well. Not, I mean, in his judgment of his characters in any harshness of prejudice, or in the obtrusion of a moral lesson; but in the very quality of his own vision, in the tone of the picture, in a certain coldness and exclusiveness of treatment.

The faults of the book are, to my sense, a want of reality and an abuse of the fanciful element—of a certain superficial symbolism. The people strike me not as characters, but as representatives, very picturesquely arranged,

of a single state of mind; and the interest of the story lies, not in them, but in the situation, which is insistently kept before us, with little progression, though with a great deal, as I have said, of a certain stable variation; and to which they, out of their reality, contribute little that helps it to live and move. I was made to feel this want of reality, this over-ingenuity, of *The Scarlet Letter*, by chancing not long since upon a novel which was read fifty years ago much more than to-day, but which is still worth reading—the story of *Adam Blair*, by John Gibson Lockhart. This interesting and powerful little tale has a great deal of analogy with Hawthorne's novel—quite enough, at least, to suggest a comparison between them; and the comparison is a very interesting one to make, for it speedily leads us to larger considerations than simple resemblances and divergences of plot.

Adam Blair, like Arthur Dimmesdale, is a Calvinistic minister who becomes the lover of a married woman, is overwhelmed with remorse at his misdeed, and makes a public confession of it; then expiates it by resigning his pastoral office and becoming a humble tiller of the soil, as his father had been. The two stories are of about the same length, and each is the masterpiece (putting aside, of course, as far as Lockhart is concerned, the *Life of Scott*) of the author. They deal alike with the manners of a rigidly theological society, and even in certain details they correspond. In each of them, between the guilty pair, there is a charming little girl; though I hasten to say that Sarah Blair (who is not the daughter of the heroine, but the legitimate offspring of the hero, a widower) is far from being as brilliant and graceful an apparition as the admirable little Pearl of *The Scarlet Letter*. The main difference between the two tales is the fact that in

the American story the husband plays an all-important part, and in the Scottish plays almost none at all. *Adam Blair* is the history of the passion, and *The Scarlet Letter* the history of its sequel; but nevertheless, if one has read the two books at a short interval, it is impossible to avoid confronting them. I confess that a large portion of the interest of *Adam Blair*, to my mind, when once I had perceived that it would repeat in a great measure the situation of *The Scarlet Letter*, lay in noting its difference of tone. It threw into relief the passionless quality of Hawthorne's novel, its element of cold and ingenious fantasy, its elaborate imaginative delicacy. These things do not precisely constitute a weakness in *The Scarlet Letter*; indeed, in a certain way they constitute a great strength; but the absence of a certain something warm and straightforward, a trifle more grossly human and vulgarly natural, which one finds in *Adam Blair*, will always make Hawthorne's tale less touching to a large number of even very intelligent readers, than a love-story told with the robust, synthetic pathos which served Lockhart so well. His novel is not of the first rank (I should call it an excellent second-rate one), but it borrows a charm from the fact that his vigorous, but not strongly imaginative, mind was impregnated with the reality of his subject. He did not always succeed in rendering this reality; the expression is sometimes awkward and poor. But the reader feels that his vision was clear, and his feeling about the matter very strong and rich. Hawthorne's imagination, on the other hand, plays with his theme so incessantly, leads it such a dance through the moon-lighted air of his intellect, that the thing cools off, as it were, hardens and stiffens, and, producing effects much more exquisite, leaves the reader with a sense of having handled a splendid piece of

silversmith's work. Lockhart, by means much more vulgar, produces at moments a greater illusion, and satisfies our inevitable desire for something, in the people in whom it is sought to interest us, that shall be of the same pitch and the same continuity with ourselves. Above all, it is interesting to see how the same subject appears to two men of a thoroughly different cast of mind and of a different race. Lockhart was struck with the warmth of the subject that offered itself to him, and Hawthorne with its coldness; the one with its glow, its sentimental interest—the other with its shadow, its moral interest. Lockhart's story is as decent, as severely draped, as *The Scarlet Letter*; but the author has a more vivid sense than appears to have imposed itself upon Hawthorne, of some of the incidents of the situation he describes; his tempted man and tempting woman are more actual and personal; his heroine in especial, though not in the least a delicate or a subtle conception, has a sort of credible, visible, palpable property, a vulgar roundness and relief, which are lacking to the dim and chastened image of Hester Prynne. But I am going too far; I am comparing simplicity with subtlety, the usual with the refined. Each man wrote as his turn of mind impelled him, but each expressed something more than himself. Lockhart was a dense, substantial Briton, with a taste for the concrete, and Hawthorne was a thin New Englander, with a miasmatic conscience.

In *The Scarlet Letter* there is a great deal of symbolism; there is, I think, too much. It is overdone at times, and becomes mechanical; it ceases to be impressive, and grazes triviality. The idea of the mystic A which the young minister finds imprinted upon his breast and eating into his flesh, in sympathy with the embroidered badge that Hester is condemned to wear, appears to me to be a case

in point. This suggestion should, I think, have been just made and dropped; to insist upon it and return to it, is to exaggerate the weak side of the subject. Hawthorne returns to it constantly, plays with it, and seems charmed by it; until at last the reader feels tempted to declare that his enjoyment of it is puerile. In the admirable scene, so superbly conceived and beautifully executed, in which Mr. Dimmesdale, in the stillness of the night, in the middle of the sleeping town, feels impelled to go and stand upon the scaffold where his mistress had formerly enacted her dreadful penance, and then, seeing Hester pass along the street, from watching at a sick-bed, with little Pearl at her side, calls them both to come and stand there beside him—in this masterly episode the effect is almost spoiled by the introduction of one of these superficial conceits. What leads up to it is very fine—so fine that I cannot do better than quote it as a specimen of one of the striking pages of the book.

“But before Mr. Dimmesdale had done speaking, a light gleamed far and wide over all the muffled sky. It was doubtless caused by one of those meteors which the night-watcher may so often observe burning out to waste in the vacant regions of the atmosphere. So powerful was its radiance that it thoroughly illuminated the dense medium of cloud betwixt the sky and earth. The great vault brightened, like the dome of an immense lamp. It showed the familiar scene of the street with the distinctness of mid-day, but also with the awfulness that is always imparted to familiar objects by an unaccustomed light. The wooden houses, with their jutting stories and quaint gable-peaks; the door-steps and thresholds, with the early grass springing up about them; the garden-plots, black with freshly-turned earth; the wheel-track, little worn, and, even in the market-place, margined with green on either side;—all were visible, but

with a singularity of aspect that seemed to give another moral interpretation to the things of this world than they had ever borne before. And there stood the minister, with his hand over his heart; and Hester Prynne, with the embroidered letter glimmering on her bosom; and little Pearl, herself a symbol, and the connecting link between these two. They stood in the noon of that strange and solemn splendour, as if it were the light that is to reveal all secrets, and the daybreak that shall unite all that belong to one another."

That is imaginative, impressive, poetic; but when, almost immediately afterwards, the author goes on to say that "the minister looking upward to the zenith, beheld there the appearance of an immense letter—the letter *A*—marked out in lines of dull red light," we feel that he goes too far, and is in danger of crossing the line that separates the sublime from its intimate neighbour. We are tempted to say that this is not moral tragedy, but physical comedy. In the same way, too much is made of the intimation that Hester's badge had a scorching property, and that if one touched it one would immediately withdraw one's hand. Hawthorne is perpetually looking for images which shall place themselves in picturesque correspondence with the spiritual facts with which he is concerned, and of course the search is of the very essence of poetry. But in such a process discretion is everything, and when the image becomes importunate it is in danger of seeming to stand for nothing more serious than itself. When Hester meets the minister by appointment in the forest, and sits talking with him while little Pearl wanders away and plays by the edge of the brook, the child is represented as at last making her way over to the other side of the woodland stream, and disporting herself there in a manner which makes her mother feel herself, "in some in-

distinct and tantalising manner, estranged from Pearl; as if the child, in her lonely ramble through the forest, had strayed out of the sphere in which she and her mother dwelt together, and was now vainly seeking to return to it." And Hawthorne devotes a chapter to this idea of the child's having, by putting the brook between Hester and herself, established a kind of spiritual gulf, on the verge of which her little fantastic person innocently mocks at her mother's sense of bereavement. This conception belongs, one would say, quite to the lighter order of a story-teller's devices, and the reader hardly goes with Hawthorne in the large development he gives to it. He hardly goes with him either, I think, in his extreme predilection for a small number of vague ideas which are represented by such terms as "sphere" and "sympathies." Hawthorne makes too liberal a use of these two substantives; it is the solitary defect of his style; and it counts as a defect partly because the words in question are a sort of specialty with certain writers immeasurably inferior to himself.

I had not meant, however, to expatiate upon his defects, which are of the slenderest and most venial kind. *The Scarlet Letter* has the beauty and harmony of all original and complete conceptions, and its weaker spots, whatever they are, are not of its essence; they are mere light flaws and inequalities of surface. One can often return to it; it supports familiarity, and has the inexhaustible charm and mystery of great works of art. It is admirably written. Hawthorne afterwards polished his style to a still higher degree; but in his later productions—it is almost always the case in a writer's later productions—there is a touch of mannerism. In *The Scarlet Letter* there is a high degree of polish, and at the same time a charming freshness;

his phrase is less conscious of itself. His biographer very justly calls attention to the fact that his style was excellent from the beginning; that he appeared to have passed through no phase of learning how to write, but was in possession of his means, from the first, of his handling a pen. His early tales, perhaps, were not of a character to subject his faculty of expression to a very severe test; but a man who had not Hawthorne's natural sense of language would certainly have contrived to write them less well. This natural sense of language—this turn for saying things lightly and yet touchingly, picturesquely yet simply, and for infusing a gently colloquial tone into matter of the most unfamiliar import—he had evidently cultivated with great assiduity. I have spoken of the anomalous character of his Note-Books—of his going to such pains often to make a record of incidents which either were not worth remembering, or could be easily remembered without its aid. But it helps us to understand the Note-Books if we regard them as a literary exercise. They were compositions, as school-boys say, in which the subject was only the pretext, and the main point was to write a certain amount of excellent English. Hawthorne must at least have written a great many of these things for practice, and he must often have said to himself that it was better practice to write about trifles, because it was a greater tax upon one's skill to make them interesting. And his theory was just, for he has almost always made his trifles interesting. In his novels his art of saying things well is very positively tested; for here he treats of those matters among which it is very easy for a blundering writer to go wrong—the subtleties and mysteries of life, the moral and spiritual maze. In such a passage as one I have marked for quotation from *The Scarlet Letter*, there is the stamp of the genius of style:—

“Hester Prynne, gazing steadfastly at the clergyman, felt a dreary influence come over her, but wherefore or whence she knew not, unless that he seemed so remote from her own sphere and utterly beyond her reach. One glance of recognition she had imagined must needs pass between them. She thought of the dim forest, with its little dell of solitude, and love, and anguish, and the mossy tree-trunk, where, sitting hand in hand, they had mingled their sad and passionate talk with the melancholy murmur of the brook. How deeply had they known each other then! And was this the man? She hardly knew him now! He, moving proudly past, enveloped as it were in the rich music, with the procession of majestic and venerable fathers; he, so unattainable in his worldly position, and still more so in that far vista in his unsympathising thoughts, through which she now beheld him! Her spirit sank with the idea that all must have been a delusion, and that vividly as she had dreamed it, there could be no real bond betwixt the clergyman and herself. And thus much of woman there was in Hester, that she could scarcely forgive him—least of all now, when the heavy footstep of their approaching fate might be heard, nearer, nearer, nearer!—for being able to withdraw himself so completely from their mutual world; while she groped darkly, and stretched forth her cold hands, and found him not!”

The House of the Seven Gables was written at Lenox, among the mountains of Massachusetts, a village nestling, rather loosely, in one of the loveliest corners of New England, to which Hawthorne had betaken himself after the success of *The Scarlet Letter* became conspicuous, in the summer of 1850, and where he occupied for two years an uncomfortable little red house, which is now pointed out to the inquiring stranger. The inquiring stranger is now a frequent figure at Lenox, for the place has suffered the process of lionisation. It has become a prosperous watering-place, or at least (as there are no waters), as they say in

America, a summer-resort. It is a brilliant and generous landscape, and thirty years ago a man of fancy, desiring to apply himself, might have found both inspiration and tranquillity there. Hawthorne found so much of both that he wrote more during his two years of residence at Lenox than at any period of his career. He began with *The House of the Seven Gables*, which was finished in the early part of 1851. This is the longest of his three American novels; it is the most elaborate, and in the judgment of some persons it is the finest. It is a rich, delightful, imaginative work, larger and more various than its companions, and full of all sorts of deep intentions, of interwoven threads of suggestion. But it is not so rounded and complete as *The Scarlet Letter*; it has always seemed to me more like a prologue to a great novel than a great novel itself. I think this is partly owing to the fact that the subject, the *donnée*, as the French say, of the story, does not quite fill it out, and that we get at the same time an impression of certain complicated purposes on the author's part, which seem to reach beyond it. I call it larger and more various than its companions, and it has, indeed, a greater richness of tone and density of detail. The colour, so to speak, of *The House of the Seven Gables* is admirable. But the story has a sort of expansive quality which never wholly fructifies, and as I lately laid it down, after reading it for the third time, I had a sense of having interested myself in a magnificent fragment. Yet the book has a great fascination; and of all of those of its author's productions which I have read over while writing this sketch, it is perhaps the one that has gained most by repersual. If it be true of the others that the pure, natural quality of the imaginative strain is their great merit, this is at least as true of *The House of the Seven Gables*, the

charm of which is in a peculiar degree of the kind that we fail to reduce to its grounds—like that of the sweetness of a piece of music, or the softness of fine September weather. It is vague, indefinable, ineffable; but it is the sort of thing we must always point to in justification of the high claim that we make for Hawthorne. In this case, of course, its vagueness is a drawback, for it is difficult to point to ethereal beauties; and if the reader whom we have wished to inoculate with our admiration inform us, after looking awhile, that he perceives nothing in particular, we can only reply that, in effect, the object is a delicate one.

The House of the Seven Gables comes nearer being a picture of contemporary American life than either of its companions; but on this ground it would be a mistake to make a large claim for it. It cannot be too often repeated that Hawthorne was not a realist. He had a high sense of reality—his Note-Books superabundantly testify to it; and fond as he was of jotting down the items that make it up, he never attempted to render exactly or closely the actual facts of the society that surrounded him. I have said—I began by saying—that his pages were full of its spirit, and of a certain reflected light that springs from it; but I was careful to add that the reader must look for his local and national qualities between the lines of his writing and in the *indirect* testimony of his tone, his accent, his temper, of his very omissions and suppressions. *The House of the Seven Gables* has, however, more literal actuality than the others, and if it were not too fanciful an account of it, I should say that it renders, to an initiated reader, the impression of a summer afternoon in an elm-shadowed New England town. It leaves upon the mind a vague correspondence to some such reminiscence, and in

stirring up the association it renders it delightful. The comparison is to the honour of the New England town, which gains in it more than it bestows. The shadows of the elms, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, are exceptionally dense and cool; the summer afternoon is peculiarly still and beautiful; the atmosphere has a delicious warmth, and the long daylight seems to pause and rest. But the mild provincial quality is there, the mixture of shabbiness and freshness, the paucity of ingredients. The end of an old race—this is the situation that Hawthorne has depicted, and he has been admirably inspired in the choice of the figures in whom he seeks to interest us. They are all figures rather than characters—they are all pictures rather than persons. But if their reality is light and vague, it is sufficient, and it is in harmony with the low relief and dimness of outline of the objects that surrounded them. They are all types, to the author's mind, of something general, of something that is bound up with the history, at large, of families and individuals, and each of them is the centre of a cluster of those ingenious and meditative musings, rather melancholy, as a general thing, than joyous, which melt into the current and texture of the story and give it a kind of moral richness. A grotesque old spinster, simple, childish, penniless, very humble at heart, but rigidly conscious of her pedigree; an amiable bachelor, of an epicurean temperament and an enfeebled intellect, who has passed twenty years of his life in penal confinement for a crime of which he was unjustly pronounced guilty; a sweet-natured and bright-faced young girl from the country, a poor relation of these two ancient decrepitudes, with whose moral mustiness her modern freshness and soundness are contrasted; a young man still more modern, holding the latest opinions, who has sought

his fortune up and down the world, and, though he has not found it, takes a genial and enthusiastic view of the future: these, with two or three remarkable accessory figures, are the persons concerned in the little drama. The drama is a small one, but as Hawthorne does not put it before us for its own superficial sake, for the dry facts of the case, but for something in it which he holds to be symbolic and of large application, something that points a moral and that it behoves us to remember, the scenes in the rusty wooden house whose gables give its name to the story, have something of the dignity both of history and of tragedy. Miss Hephzibah Pyncheon, dragging out a disappointed life in her paternal dwelling, finds herself obliged in her old age to open a little shop for the sale of penny toys and gingerbread. This is the central incident of the tale, and, as Hawthorne relates it, it is an incident of the most impressive magnitude and most touching interest. Her dishonoured and vague-minded brother is released from prison at the same moment, and returns to the ancestral roof to deepen her perplexities. But, on the other hand, to alleviate them, and to introduce a breath of the air of the outer world into this long unventilated interior, the little country cousin also arrives, and proves the good angel of the feebly distracted household. All this episode is exquisite — admirably conceived and executed, with a kind of humorous tenderness, an equal sense of everything in it that is picturesque, touching, ridiculous, worthy of the highest praise. Hephzibah Pyncheon, with her near-sighted scowl, her rusty joints, her antique turban, her map of a great territory to the eastward which ought to have belonged to her family, her vain terrors, and scruples, and resentments, the inaptitude and repugnance of an ancient gentlewoman to the vulgar little commerce which

a cruel fate has compelled her to engage in—Hephzibah Pyncheon is a masterly picture. I repeat that she is a picture, as her companions are pictures; she is a charming piece of descriptive writing, rather than a dramatic exhibition. But she is described, like her companions, too, so subtly and lovingly that we enter into her virginal old heart and stand with her behind her abominable little counter. Clifford Pyncheon is a still more remarkable conception, though he is, perhaps, not so vividly depicted. It was a figure needing a much more subtle touch, however, and it was of the essence of his character to be vague and unemphasised. Nothing can be more charming than the manner in which the soft, bright, active presence of Phœbe Pyncheon is indicated, or than the account of her relations with the poor, dimly sentient kinsman for whom her light-handed sisterly offices, in the evening of a melancholy life, are a revelation of lost possibilities of happiness. "In her aspect," Hawthorne says of the young girl, "there was a familiar gladness, and a holiness that you could play with, and yet reverence it as much as ever. She was like a prayer offered up in the homeliest beauty of one's mother-tongue. Fresh was Phœbe, moreover, and airy, and sweet in her apparel; as if nothing that she wore—neither her gown, nor her small straw bonnet, nor her little kerchief, any more than her snowy stockings—had ever been put on before; or, if worn, were all the fresher for it, and with a fragrance as if they had lain among the rosebuds." Of the influence of her maidenly salubrity upon poor Clifford, Hawthorne gives the prettiest description, and then, breaking off suddenly, renounces the attempt in language which, while pleading its inadequacy, conveys an exquisite satisfaction to the reader. I quote the passage for the sake of its extreme felicity, and of the charming image with which it concludes.

"But we strive in vain to put the idea into words. No adequate expression of the beauty and profound pathos with which it impresses us is attainable. This being, made only for happiness, and heretofore so miserably failing to be happy—his tendencies so hideously thwarted that, some unknown time ago, the delicate springs of his character, never morally or intellectually strong, had given way, and he was now imbecile—this poor forlorn voyager from the Islands of the Blest, in a frail bark, on a tempestuous sea, had been flung by the last mountain-wave of his shipwreck into a quiet harbour. There, as he lay more than half lifeless on the strand, the fragrance of an earthly rose-bud had come to his nostrils, and, as odours will, had summoned up reminiscences or visions of all the living and breathing beauty amid which he should have had his home. With his native susceptibility of happy influences, he inhales the slight ethereal rapture into his soul, and expires!"

I have not mentioned the personage in *The House of the Seven Gables* upon whom Hawthorne evidently bestowed most pains, and whose portrait is the most elaborate in the book; partly because he is, in spite of the space he occupies, an accessory figure, and partly because, even more than the others, he is what I have called a picture rather than a character. Judge Pyncheon is an ironical portrait, very richly and broadly executed, very sagaciously composed and rendered—the portrait of a superb, full-blown hypocrite, a large-based, full-nurtured Pharisee, bland, urbane, impressive, diffusing about him a "sultry" warmth of benevolence, as the author calls it again and again, and basking in the noontide of prosperity and the consideration of society; but in reality hard, gross, and ignoble. Judge Pyncheon is an elaborate piece of description, made up of a hundred admirable touches, in which satire is always winged with fancy, and fancy is linked with a deep

sense of reality. It is difficult to say whether Hawthorne followed a model in describing Judge Pyncheon ; but it is tolerably obvious that the picture is an impression—a copious impression—of an individual. It has evidently a definite starting-point in fact, and the author is able to draw, freely and confidently, after the image established in his mind. Holgrave, the modern young man, who has been a Jack-of-all-trades, and is at the period of the story a daguerreotypist, is an attempt to render a kind of national type—that of the young citizen of the United States whose fortune is simply in his lively intelligence, and who stands naked, as it were, unbiased and unencumbered alike, in the centre of the far-stretching level of American life. Holgrave is intended as a contrast ; his lack of traditions, his democratic stamp, his condensed experience, are opposed to the desiccated prejudices and exhausted vitality of the race of which poor feebly-scowling, rusty-jointed Hephzibah is the most heroic representative. It is, perhaps, a pity that Hawthorne should not have proposed to himself to give the old Pyncheon qualities some embodiment which would help them to balance more fairly with the elastic properties of the young daguerreotypist—should not have painted a lusty conservative to match his strenuous radical. As it is, the mustiness and mouldiness of the tenants of the House of the Seven Gables crumble away rather too easily. Evidently, however, what Hawthorne designed to represent was not the struggle between an old society and a new, for in this case he would have given the old one a better chance ; but simply, as I have said, the shrinkage and extinction of a family. This appealed to his imagination ; and the idea of long perpetuation and survival always appears to have filled him with a kind of horror and disapproval. Conservative, in a certain degree, as he was

himself, and fond of retrospect and quietude and the mellowing influences of time, it is singular how often one encounters in his writings some expression of mistrust of old houses, old institutions, long lines of descent. He was disposed, apparently, to allow a very moderate measure in these respects, and he condemns the dwelling of the Pyncheons to disappear from the face of the earth because it has been standing a couple of hundred years. In this he was an American of Americans; or, rather, he was more American than many of his countrymen, who, though they are accustomed to work for the short run rather than the long, have often a lurking esteem for things that show the marks of having lasted. I will add that Holgrave is one of the few figures, among those which Hawthorne created, with regard to which the absence of the realistic mode of treatment is felt as a loss. Holgrave is not sharply enough characterised; he lacks features; he is not an individual, but a type. But my last word about this admirable novel must not be a restrictive one. It is a large and generous production, pervaded with that vague hum, that indefinable echo, of the whole multitudinous life of man, which is the real sign of a great work of fiction.

After the publication of *The House of the Seven Gables*, which brought him great honour, and, I believe, a tolerable share of a more ponderable substance, he composed a couple of little volumes for children — *The Wonder-Book*, and a small collection of stories entitled *Tanglewood Tales*. They are not among his most serious literary titles, but if I may trust my own early impression of them, they are among the most charming literary services that have been rendered to children in an age (and especially in a country) in which the exactions of the infant mind have exerted much too palpable an influence upon literature. Hawthorne's

stories are the old Greek myths, made more vivid to the childish imagination by an infusion of details which both deepen and explain their marvels. I have been careful not to read them over, for I should be very sorry to risk disturbing in any degree a recollection of them that has been at rest since the appreciative period of life to which they are addressed. They seem at that period enchanting, and the ideal of happiness of many American children is to lie upon the carpet and lose themselves in *The Wonder-Book*. It is in its pages that they first make the acquaintance of the heroes and heroines of the antique mythology, and something of the nursery fairy-tale quality of interest which Hawthorne imparts to them always remains.

I have said that Lenox was a very pretty place, and that he was able to work there Hawthorne proved by composing *The House of the Seven Gables* with a good deal of rapidity. But, at the close of the year in which this novel was published, he wrote to a friend (Mr. Fields, his publisher) that, "to tell you a secret, I am sick to death of Berkshire, and hate to think of spending another winter here. . . . The air and climate do not agree with my health at all, and for the first time since I was a boy I have felt languid and dispirited. . . . O that Providence would build me the merest little shanty, and mark me out a rood or two of garden ground, near the sea-coast!" He was at this time for a while out of health; and it is proper to remember that though the Massachusetts Berkshire, with its mountains and lakes, was charming during the ardent American summer, there was a reverse to the medal, consisting of December snows prolonged into April and May. Providence failed to provide him with a cottage by the sea; but he betook himself for the winter of 1852 to the little

town of West Newton, near Boston, where he brought into the world *The Blithedale Romance*.

This work, as I have said, would not have been written if Hawthorne had not spent a year at Brook Farm, and though it is in no sense of the word an account of the manners or the inmates of that establishment, it will preserve the memory of the ingenious community at West Roxbury for a generation unconscious of other reminders. I hardly know what to say about it, save that it is very charming; this vague, unanalytic epithet is the first that comes to one's pen in treating of Hawthorne's novels, for their extreme amenity of form invariably suggests it; but if, on the one hand, it claims to be uttered, on the other it frankly confesses its inconclusiveness. Perhaps, however, in this case it fills out the measure of appreciation more completely than in others, for *The Blithedale Romance* is the lightest, the brightest, the liveliest, of this company of unhumorous fictions.

The story is told from a more joyous point of view—from a point of view comparatively humorous—and a number of objects and incidents touched with the light of the profane world—the vulgar, many-coloured world of actuality, as distinguished from the crepuscular realm of the writer's own reveries—are mingled with its course. The book, indeed, is a mixture of elements, and it leaves in the memory an impression analogous to that of an April day—an alternation of brightness and shadow, of broken sun-patches and sprinkling clouds. Its *dénoûment* is tragical—there is, indeed, nothing so tragical in all Hawthorne, unless it be the murder of Miriam's persecutor by Donatello, in *Transformation*, as the suicide of Zenobia; and yet, on the whole, the effect of the novel is to make one think more agreeably of life. The standpoint of the

narrator has the advantage of being a concrete one; he is no longer, as in the preceding tales, a disembodied spirit, imprisoned in the haunted chamber of his own contemplations, but a particular man, with a certain human grossness.

Of Miles Coverdale I have already spoken, and of its being natural to assume that, in so far as we may measure this lightly indicated identity of his, it has a great deal in common with that of his creator. Coverdale is a picture of the contemplative, observant, analytic nature, nursing its fancies, and yet, thanks to an element of strong good sense, not bringing them up to be spoiled children; having little at stake in life, at any given moment, and yet indulging, in imagination, in a good many adventures; a portrait of a man, in a word, whose passions are slender, whose imagination is active, and whose happiness lies, not in doing, but in perceiving—half a poet, half a critic, and all a spectator. He is contrasted excellently with the figure of Hollingsworth, the heavily treading Reformer, whose attitude with regard to the world is that of the hammer to the anvil, and who has no patience with his friend's indifferences and neutralities. Coverdale is a gentle sceptic, a mild cynic; he would agree that life is a little worth living—or worth living a little; but would remark that, unfortunately, to live little enough, we have to live a great deal. He confesses to a want of earnestness, but in reality he is evidently an excellent fellow, to whom one might look, not for any personal performance on a great scale, but for a good deal of generosity of detail. "As Hollingsworth once told me, I lack a purpose," he writes, at the close of his story. "How strange! He was ruined, morally, by an overplus of the same ingredient the want of which, I occasionally suspect, has rendered my own life all an emptiness. I by no means wish to die. Yet, were

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there any cause in this whole chaos of human struggle worth a sane man's dying for, and which my death would benefit, then—provided, however, the effort did not involve an unreasonable amount of trouble—methinks I might be bold to offer up my life. If Kossuth, for example, would pitch the battle-field of Hungarian rights within an easy ride of my abode, and choose a mild, sunny morning, after breakfast, for the conflict, Miles Coverdale would gladly be his man for one brave rush upon the levelled bayonets. Further than that I should be loth to pledge myself."

The finest thing in *The Blithedale Romance* is the character of Zenobia, which I have said elsewhere strikes me as the nearest approach that Hawthorne has made to the complete creation of a *person*. She is more concrete than Hester or Miriam, or Hilda or Phœbe; she is a more definite image, produced by a greater multiplicity of touches. It is idle to inquire too closely whether Hawthorne had Margaret Fuller in his mind in constructing the figure of this brilliant specimen of the strong-minded class, and endowing her with the genius of conversation; or, on the assumption that such was the case, to compare the image at all strictly with the model. There is no strictness in the representation by novelists of persons who have struck them in life, and there can in the nature of things be none. From the moment the imagination takes a hand in the game, the inevitable tendency is to divergence, to following what may be called new scents. The original gives hints, but the writer does what he likes with them, and imports new elements into the picture. If there is this amount of reason for referring the wayward heroine of Blithedale to Hawthorne's impression of the most distinguished woman of her day in Boston; that Margaret Fuller was the only literary lady of eminence whom there is any

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sign of his having known ; that she was proud, passionate, and eloquent ; that she was much connected with the little world of Transcendentalism out of which the experiment of Brook Farm sprung ; and that she had a miserable end and a watery grave — if these are facts to be noted on one side, I say ; on the other, the beautiful and sumptuous Zenobia, with her rich and picturesque temperament and physical aspects, offers many points of divergence from the plain and strenuous invalid who represented feminine culture in the suburbs of the New England metropolis. This picturesqueness of Zenobia is very happily indicated and maintained ; she is a woman in all the force of the term, and there is something very vivid and powerful in her large expression of womanly gifts and weaknesses. Hollingsworth is, I think, less successful, though there is much reality in the conception of the type to which he belongs — the strong-willed, narrow-hearted apostle of a special form of redemption for society. There is nothing better in all Hawthorne than the scene between him and Coverdale, when the two men are at work together in the field (piling stones on a dyke), and he gives it to his companion to choose whether he will be with him or against him. It is a pity, perhaps, to have represented him as having begun life as a blacksmith, for one grudges him the advantage of so logical a reason for his roughness and hardness.

“Hollingsworth scarcely said a word, unless when repeatedly and pertinaciously addressed. Then, indeed, he would glare upon us from the thick shrubbery of his meditations, like a tiger out of a jungle, make the briefest reply possible, and betake himself back into the solitude of his heart and mind. . . . His heart, I imagine, was never really interested in our socialist scheme, but was for ever busy with his strange

and, as most people thought, impracticable plan for the reformation of criminals through an appeal to their higher instincts. Much as I liked Hollingsworth, it cost me many a groan to tolerate him on this point. He ought to have commenced his investigation of the subject by committing some huge sin in his proper person, and examining the condition of his higher instincts afterwards."

The most touching element in the novel is the history of the grasp that this barbarous fanatic has laid upon the fastidious and high-tempered Zenobia, who, disliking him and shrinking from him at a hundred points, is drawn into the gulf of his omnivorous egotism. The portion of the story that strikes me as least felicitous is that which deals with Priscilla, and with her mysterious relation to Zenobia—with her mesmeric gifts, her clairvoyance, her identity with the Veiled Lady, her divided subjection to Hollingsworth and Westervelt, and her numerous other graceful but fantastic properties—her Sibylline attributes, as the author calls them. Hawthorne is rather too fond of Sibylline attributes—a taste of the same order as his disposition, to which I have already alluded, to talk about spheres and sympathies. As the action advances, in *The Blithedale Romance*, we get too much out of reality, and cease to feel beneath our feet the firm ground of an appeal to our own vision of the world—our observation. I should have liked to see the story concern itself more with the little community in which its earlier scenes are laid, and avail itself of so excellent an opportunity for describing unhackneyed specimens of human nature. I have already spoken of the absence of satire in the novel, of its not aiming in the least at satire, and of its offering no grounds for complaint as an invidious picture. Indeed, the brethren of Brook Farm should have held themselves slighted rather

than misrepresented, and have regretted that the admirable genius who for a while was numbered among them should have treated their institution mainly as a perch for starting upon an imaginative flight. But when all is said about a certain want of substance and cohesion in the latter portions of *The Blithedale Romance*, the book is still a delightful and beautiful one. Zenobia and Hollingsworth live in the memory; and even Priscilla and Coverdale, who linger there less importunately, have a great deal that touches us and that we believe in. I said just now that Priscilla was infelicitous; but immediately afterwards I open the volume at a page in which the author describes some of the out-of-door amusements at Blithedale, and speaks of a foot-race across the grass, in which some of the slim young girls of the society joined. "Priscilla's peculiar charm in a foot-race was the weakness and irregularity with which she ran. Growing up without exercise, except to her poor little fingers, she had never yet acquired the perfect use of her legs. Setting buoyantly forth, therefore, as if no rival less swift than Atalanta could compete with her, she ran falteringly, and often tumbled on the grass. Such an incident—though it seems too slight to think of—was a thing to laugh at, but which brought the water into one's eyes, and lingered in the memory after far greater joys and sorrows were wept out of it, as antiquated trash. Priscilla's life, as I beheld it, was full of trifles that affected me in just this way." That seems to me exquisite, and the book is full of touches as deep and delicate.

After writing it, Hawthorne went back to live in Concord, where he had bought a small house, in which, apparently, he expected to spend a large portion of his future. This was, in fact, the dwelling in which he passed that

part of the rest of his days that he spent in his own country. He established himself there before going to Europe, in 1853, and he returned to the Wayside, as he called his house, on coming back to the United States seven years later. Though he actually occupied the place no long time, he had made it his property, and it was more his own home than any of his numerous provisional abodes. I may, therefore, quote a little account of the house which he wrote to a distinguished friend, Mr. George William Curtis.

“As for my old house, you will understand it better after spending a day or two in it. Before Mr. Alcott took it in hand, it was a mean-looking affair, with two peaked gables; no suggestiveness about it, and no venerableness, although from the style of its construction it seems to have survived beyond its first century. He added a porch in front, and a central peak, and a piazza at each end, and painted it a rusty olive hue, and invested the whole with a modest picturesqueness; all which improvements, together with its situation at the foot of a wooded hill, make it a place that one notices and remembers for a few moments after passing. Mr. Alcott expended a good deal of taste and some money (to no great purpose) in forming the hillside behind the house into terraces, and building arbours and summer-houses of rough stems, and branches, and trees, on a system of his own. They must have been very pretty in their day, and are so still, although much decayed, and shattered more and more by every breeze that blows. The hillside is covered chiefly with locust-trees, which come into luxuriant blossom in the month of June, and look and smell very sweetly, intermixed with a few young elms, and white pines and infant oaks—the whole forming rather a thicket than a wood. Nevertheless, there is some very good shade to be found there. I spend delectable hours there in the hottest part of the day, stretched out at my lazy length, with a book in my hand, or some unwrit-

ten book in my thoughts. There is almost always a breeze stirring along the sides or brow of the hill. From the hill-top there is a good view along the extensive level surfaces and gentle hilly outlines, covered with wood, that characterise the scenery of Concord. . . . I know nothing of the history of the house except Thoreau's telling me that it was inhabited, a century or two ago, by a man who believed he should never die. I believe, however, he is dead; at least, I hope so; else he may probably reappear and dispute my title to his residence."

As Mr. Lathrop points out, this allusion to a man who believed he should never die is "the first intimation of the story of *Septimius Felton*." The scenery of that romance, he adds, "was evidently taken from the Wayside and its hill." *Septimius Felton* is, in fact, a young man who, at the time of the war of the Revolution, lives in the village of Concord, on the Boston road, at the base of a woody hill which rises abruptly behind his house, and of which the level summit supplies him with a promenade continually mentioned in the course of the tale. Hawthorne used to exercise himself upon this picturesque eminence, and, as he conceived the brooding Septimius to have done before him, to betake himself thither when he found the limits of his dwelling too narrow. But he had an advantage which his imaginary hero lacked; he erected a tower as an adjunct to the house, and it was a jocular tradition among his neighbours, in allusion to his attributive tendency to evade rather than hasten the coming guest, that he used to ascend this structure and scan the road for provocations to retreat.

In so far, however, as Hawthorne suffered the penalties of celebrity at the hands of intrusive fellow-citizens, he was soon to escape from this honourable incommodity.

On the 4th of March, 1853, his old college-mate and intimate friend, Franklin Pierce, was installed as President of the United States. He had been the candidate of the Democratic party, and all good Democrats, accordingly, in conformity to the beautiful and rational system under which the affairs of the great Republic were carried on, began to open their windows to the golden sunshine of Presidential patronage. When General Pierce was put forward by the Democrats, Hawthorne felt a perfectly loyal and natural desire that his good friend should be exalted to so brilliant a position, and he did what was in him to further the good cause, by writing a little book about its hero. His *Life of Franklin Pierce* belongs to that class of literature which is known as the "campaign biography," and which consists of an attempt, more or less successful, to persuade the many-headed monster of universal suffrage that the gentleman on whose behalf it is addressed is a paragon of wisdom and virtue. Of Hawthorne's little book there is nothing particular to say, save that it is in very good taste, that he is a very fairly ingenious advocate, and that if he claimed for the future President qualities which rather faded in the bright light of a high office, this defect of proportion was essential to his undertaking. He dwelt chiefly upon General Pierce's exploits in the war with Mexico (before that, his record, as they say in America, had been mainly that of a successful country lawyer), and exercised his descriptive powers, so far as was possible, in describing the advance of the United States troops from Vera Cruz to the city of the Montezumas. The mouth-pieces of the Whig party spared him, I believe, no reprobation for "prostituting" his exquisite genius; but I fail to see anything reprehensible in Hawthorne's lending his old friend the assistance of his

graceful quill. He wished him to be President—he held afterwards that he filled the office with admirable dignity and wisdom—and as the only thing he could do was to write, he fell to work and wrote for him. Hawthorne was a good lover and a very sufficient partisan, and I suspect that if Franklin Pierce had been made even less of the stuff of a statesman, he would still have found in the force of old associations an injunction to hail him as a ruler. Our hero was an American of the earlier and simpler type—the type of which it is doubtless premature to say that it has wholly passed away, but of which it may at least be said that the circumstances that produced it have been greatly modified. The generation to which he belonged, that generation which grew up with the century, witnessed during a period of fifty years the immense, uninterrupted material development of the young Republic; and when one thinks of the scale on which it took place, of the prosperity that walked in its train and waited on its course, of the hopes it fostered and the blessings it conferred—of the broad morning sunshine, in a word, in which it all went forward—there seems to be little room for surprise that it should have implanted a kind of superstitious faith in the grandeur of the country, its duration, its immunity from the usual troubles of earthly empires. This faith was a simple and uncritical one, enlivened with an element of genial optimism, in the light of which it appeared that the great American state was not as other human institutions are, that a special Providence watched over it, that it would go on joyously forever, and that a country whose vast and blooming bosom offered a refuge to the strugglers and seekers of all the rest of the world, must come off easily, in the battle of the ages. From this conception of the American future the sense of its having

problems to solve was blissfully absent; there were no difficulties in the programme, no looming complications, no rocks ahead. The indefinite multiplication of the population, and its enjoyment of the benefits of a common-school education and of unusual facilities for making an income—this was the form in which, on the whole, the future most vividly presented itself, and in which the greatness of the country was to be recognised of men. There was, indeed, a faint shadow in the picture—the shadow projected by the “peculiar institution” of the Southern States; but it was far from sufficient to darken the rosy vision of most good Americans, and, above all, of most good Democrats. Hawthorne alludes to it in a passage of his life of Pierce, which I will quote, not only as a hint of the trouble that was in store for a cheerful race of men, but as an example of his own easy-going political attitude.

“It was while in the Lower House of Congress that Franklin Pierce took that stand on the Slavery question from which he has never since swerved by a hair’s breadth. He fully recognised, by his votes and his voice, the rights pledged to the South by the Constitution. This, at the period when he declared himself, was an easy thing to do. But when it became more difficult, when the first imperceptible murmur of agitation had grown almost to a convulsion, his course was still the same. Nor did he ever shun the obloquy that sometimes threatened to pursue the Northern man who dared to love that great and sacred reality—his whole united country—better than the mistiness of a philanthropic theory.”

This last invidious allusion is to the disposition, not infrequent at the North, but by no means general, to set a decisive limit to further legislation in favour of the cherished idiosyncrasy of the other half of the country. Haw-

thorne takes the license of a sympathetic biographer in speaking of his hero's having incurred obloquy by his conservative attitude on the question of Slavery. The only class in the American world that suffered in the smallest degree, at this time, from social persecution, was the little band of Northern Abolitionists, who were as unfashionable as they were indiscreet—which is saying much. Like most of his fellow-countrymen, Hawthorne had no idea that the respectable institution which he contemplated in impressive contrast to humanitarian "mistiness," was presently to cost the nation four long years of bloodshed and misery, and a social revolution as complete as any the world has seen. When this event occurred, he was, therefore, proportionately horrified and depressed by it; it cut from beneath his feet the familiar ground which had long felt so firm, substituting a heaving and quaking medium in which his spirit found no rest. Such was the bewildered sensation of that earlier and simpler generation of which I have spoken; their illusions were rudely dispelled, and they saw the best of all possible republics given over to fratricidal carnage. This affair had no place in their scheme, and nothing was left for them but to hang their heads and close their eyes. The subsidence of that great convulsion has left a different tone from the tone it found, and one may say that the Civil War marks an era in the history of the American mind. It introduced into the national consciousness a certain sense of proportion and relation, of the world being a more complicated place than it had hitherto seemed, the future more treacherous, success more difficult. At the rate at which things are going, it is obvious that good Americans will be more numerous than ever; but the good American, in days to come, will be a more critical person than his complacent

and confident grandfather. He has eaten of the tree of knowledge. He will not, I think, be a sceptic, and still less, of course, a cynic; but he will be, without discredit to his well-known capacity for action, an observer. He will remember that the ways of the Lord are inscrutable, and that this is a world in which everything happens; and eventualities, as the late Emperor of the French used to say, will not find him intellectually unprepared. The good American of which Hawthorne was so admirable a specimen was not critical, and it was perhaps for this reason that Franklin Pierce seemed to him a very proper President.

The least that General Pierce could do in exchange for so liberal a confidence was to offer his old friend one of the numerous places in his gift. Hawthorne had a great desire to go abroad and see something of the world, so that a consulate seemed the proper thing. He never stirred in the matter himself, but his friends strongly urged that something should be done; and when he accepted the post of consul at Liverpool there was not a word of reasonable criticism to be offered on the matter. If General Pierce, who was before all things good-natured and obliging, had been guilty of no greater indiscretion than to confer this modest distinction upon the most honourable and discreet of men of letters, he would have made a more brilliant mark in the annals of American statesmanship. Liverpool had not been immediately selected, and Hawthorne had written to his friend and publisher, Mr. Fields, with some humorous vagueness of allusion to his probable expatriation.

“Do make some inquiries about Portugal; as, for instance, in what part of the world it lies, and whether it is an empire, a kingdom, or a republic. Also, and more particularly, the

expenses of living there, and whether the Minister would be likely to be much pestered with his own countrymen. Also, any other information about foreign countries would be acceptable to an inquiring mind."

It would seem from this that there had been a question of offering him a small diplomatic post; but the emoluments of the place were justly taken into account, and it is to be supposed that those of the consulate at Liverpool were at least as great as the salary of the American representative at Lisbon. Unfortunately, just after Hawthorne had taken possession of the former post, the salary attached to it was reduced by Congress, in an economical hour, to less than half the sum enjoyed by his predecessors. It was fixed at \$7,500 (£1,500); but the consular fees, which were often copious, were an added resource. At midsummer then, in 1853, Hawthorne was established in England.

CHAPTER VI.

ENGLAND AND ITALY.

HAWTHORNE was close upon fifty years of age when he came to Europe—a fact that should be remembered when those impressions which he recorded in five substantial volumes (exclusive of the novel written in Italy), occasionally affect us by the rigidity of their point of view. His Note-Books, kept during his residence in England, his two winters in Rome, his summer in Florence, were published after his death; his impressions of England, sifted, revised, and addressed directly to the public, he gave to the world shortly before this event. The tone of his European Diaries is often so fresh and unsophisticated that we find ourselves thinking of the writer as a young man, and it is only a certain final sense of something reflective and a trifle melancholy that reminds us that the simplicity which is, on the whole, the leading characteristic of their pages is, though the simplicity of inexperience, not that of youth. When I say inexperience, I mean that Hawthorne's experience had been narrow. His fifty years had been spent, for much the larger part, in small American towns—Salem, the Boston of forty years ago, Concord, Lenox, West Newton—and he had led exclusively what one may call a village life. This is evident, not at all directly and superficially, but by implication and between

the lines, in his desultory history of his foreign years. In other words, and to call things by their names, he was exquisitely and consistently provincial. I suggest this fact not in the least in condemnation, but, on the contrary, in support of an appreciative view of him. I know nothing more remarkable, more touching, than the sight of this odd, youthful-elderly mind, contending so late in the day with new opportunities for learning old things, and, on the whole, profiting by them so freely and gracefully. The Note-Books are provincial, and so, in a greatly modified degree, are the sketches of England, in *Our Old Home*; but the beauty and delicacy of this latter work are so interwoven with the author's air of being remotely outside of everything he describes, that they count for more, seem more themselves, and finally give the whole thing the appearance of a triumph, not of initiation, but of the provincial point of view itself.

I shall not attempt to relate in detail the incidents of his residence in England. He appears to have enjoyed it greatly, in spite of the deficiency of charm in the place to which his duties chiefly confined him. His confinement, however, was not unbroken, and his published Journals consist largely of minute accounts of little journeys and wanderings, with his wife and his three children, through the rest of the country; together with much mention of numerous visits to London, a city for whose dusky immensity and multitudinous interest he professed the highest relish. His Note-Books are of the same cast as the two volumes of his American Diaries, of which I have given some account—chiefly occupied with external matters, with the accidents of daily life, with observations made during the long walks (often with his son) which formed his most valued pastime. His office, moreover,

though Liverpool was not a delectable home, furnished him with entertainment as well as occupation, and it may almost be said that during these years he saw more of his fellow-countrymen, in the shape of odd wanderers, petitioners, and inquirers of every kind, than he had ever done in his native land. The paper entitled "Consular Experiences," in *Our Old Home*, is an admirable recital of these observations, and a proof that the novelist might have found much material in the opportunities of the consul. On his return to America, in 1860, he drew from his Journal a number of pages relating to his observations in England, re-wrote them (with, I should suppose, a good deal of care), and converted them into articles which he published in a magazine. These chapters were afterwards collected, and *Our Old Home* (a rather infelicitous title) was issued in 1863. I prefer to speak of the book now, however, rather than in touching upon the closing years of his life, for it is a kind of deliberate *résumé* of his impressions of the land of his ancestors. "It is not a good or a weighty book," he wrote to his publisher, who had sent him some reviews of it, "nor does it deserve any great amount of praise or censure. I don't care about seeing any more notices of it." Hawthorne's appreciation of his own productions was always extremely just; he had a sense of the relations of things, which some of his admirers have not thought it well to cultivate; and he never exaggerated his own importance as a writer. *Our Old Home* is not a weighty book; it is decidedly a light one. But when he says it is not a good one, I hardly know what he means, and his modesty at this point is in excess of his discretion. Whether good or not, *Our Old Home* is charming—it is most delectable reading. The execution is singularly perfect and ripe; of all his productions it seems to

be the best written. The touch, as musicians say, is admirable; the lightness, the fineness, the felicity of characterisation and description, belong to a man who has the advantage of feeling delicately. His judgment is by no means always sound; it often rests on too narrow an observation. But his perception is of the keenest, and though it is frequently partial, incomplete, it is excellent as far as it goes. The book gave but limited satisfaction, I believe, in England, and I am not sure that the failure to enjoy certain manifestations of its sportive irony has not chilled the appreciation of its singular grace. That English readers, on the whole, should have felt that Hawthorne did the national mind and manners but partial justice, is, I think, conceivable; at the same time that it seems to me remarkable that the tender side of the book, as I may call it, should not have carried it off better. It abounds in passages more delicately appreciative than can easily be found elsewhere, and it contains more charming and affectionate things than, I should suppose, had ever before been written about a country not the writer's own. To say that it is an immeasurably more exquisite and sympathetic work than any of the numerous persons who have related their misadventures in the United States have seen fit to devote to that country, is to say but little, and I imagine that Hawthorne had in mind the array of English voyagers—Mrs. Trollope, Dickens, Marryat, Basil Hall, Miss Martineau, Mr. Grattan—when he reflected that everything is relative, and that, as such books go, his own little volume observed the amenities of criticism. He certainly had it in mind when he wrote the phrase in his preface relating to the impression the book might make in England. “Not an Englishman of them all ever spared America for courtesy's sake or kindness; nor, in my opinion, would it

contribute in the least to any mutual advantage and comfort if we were to besmear each other all over with butter and honey." I am far from intending to intimate that the vulgar instinct of recrimination had anything to do with the restrictive passages of *Our Old Home*; I mean simply, that the author had a prevision that his collection of sketches would in some particulars fail to please his English friends. He professed, after the event, to have discovered that the English are sensitive, and as they say of the Americans, for whose advantage I believe the term was invented, thin skinned. "The English critics," he wrote to his publisher, "seem to think me very bitter against their countrymen, and it is perhaps natural that they should, because their self-conceit can accept nothing short of indiscriminate adulation; but I really think that Americans have much more cause than they to complain of me. Looking over the volume, I am rather surprised to find that, whenever I draw a comparison between the two people, I almost invariably cast the balance against ourselves." And he writes at another time:—"I received several private letters and printed notices of *Our Old Home* from England. It is laughable to see the innocent wonder with which they regard my criticisms, accounting for them by jaundice, insanity, jealousy, hatred, on my part, and never admitting the least suspicion that there may be a particle of truth in them. The monstrosity of their self-conceit is such that anything short of unlimited admiration impresses them as malicious caricature. But they do me great injustice in supposing that I hate them. I would as soon hate my own people." The idea of his hating the English was of course too puerile for discussion; and the book, as I have said, is full of a rich appreciation of the finest characteristics of the country. But

it has a serious defect—a defect which impairs its value, though it helps to give consistency to such an image of Hawthorne's personal nature as we may by this time have been able to form. It is the work of an outsider, of a stranger, of a man who remains to the end a mere spectator (something less even than an observer), and always lacks the final initiation into the manners and nature of a people of whom it may most be said, among all the people of the earth, that to know them is to make discoveries. Hawthorne freely confesses to this constant exteriority, and appears to have been perfectly conscious of it. "I remember," he writes in the sketch of "A London Suburb," in *Our Old Home*—"I remember to this day the dreary feeling with which I sat by our first English fireside and watched the chill and rainy twilight of an autumn day darkening down upon the garden, while the preceding occupant of the house (evidently a most unamiable personage in his lifetime), scowled inhospitably from above the mantel-piece, as if indignant that an American should try to make himself at home there. Possibly it may appease his sulky shade to know that I quitted his abode as much a stranger as I entered it." The same note is struck in an entry in his Journal, of the date of October 6th, 1854.

"The people, for several days, have been in the utmost anxiety, and latterly in the highest exultation, about Sebastopol—and all England, and Europe to boot, have been fooled by the belief that it had fallen. This, however, now turns out to be incorrect; and the public visage is somewhat grim in consequence. I am glad of it. In spite of his actual sympathies, it is impossible for an American to be otherwise than glad. Success makes an Englishman intolerable, and already, on the mistaken idea that the way was open to a prosperous conclusion of the war, the *Times* had

begun to throw out menaces against America. I shall never love England till she sues to us for help, and, in the meantime, the fewer triumphs she obtains, the better for all parties. An Englishman in adversity is a very respectable character; he does not lose his dignity, but merely comes to a proper conception of himself. . . . I seem to myself like a spy or traitor when I meet their eyes, and am conscious that I neither hope nor fear in sympathy with them, although they look at me in full confidence of sympathy. Their heart 'knoweth its own bitterness;' and as for me, being a stranger and an alien, I 'intermeddle not with their joy.' "

This seems to me to express very well the weak side of Hawthorne's work—his constant mistrust and suspicion of the society that surrounded him, his exaggerated, painful, morbid national consciousness. It is, I think, an indisputable fact that Americans are, as Americans, the most self-conscious people in the world, and the most addicted to the belief that the other nations of the earth are in a conspiracy to undervalue them. They are conscious of being the youngest of the great nations, of not being of the European family, of being placed on the circumference of the circle of civilisation rather than at the centre, of the experimental element not having as yet entirely dropped out of their great political undertaking. The sense of this relativity, in a word, replaces that quiet and comfortable sense of the absolute, as regards its own position in the world, which reigns supreme in the British and in the Gallic genius. Few persons, I think, can have mingled much with Americans in Europe without having made this reflection, and it is in England that their habit of looking askance at foreign institutions—of keeping one eye, as it were, on the American personality, while with the other they contemplate these objects—is most to be

observed. Add to this that Hawthorne came to England late in life, when his habits, his tastes, his opinions, were already formed, that he was inclined to look at things in silence and brood over them gently, rather than talk about them, discuss them, grow acquainted with them by action; and it will be possible to form an idea of our writer's detached and critical attitude in the country in which it is easiest, thanks to its aristocratic constitution, to the absence of any considerable public fund of entertainment and diversion, to the degree in which the inexhaustible beauty and interest of the place are private property, demanding constantly a special introduction—in the country in which, I say, it is easiest for a stranger to remain a stranger. For a stranger to cease to be a stranger he must stand ready, as the French say, to pay with his person; and this was an obligation that Hawthorne was indisposed to incur. Our sense, as we read, that his reflections are those of a shy and susceptible man, with nothing at stake, mentally, in his appreciation of the country, is, therefore, a drawback to our confidence; but it is not a drawback sufficient to make it of no importance that he is at the same time singularly intelligent and discriminating, with a faculty of feeling delicately and justly, which constitutes in itself an illumination. There is a passage in the sketch entitled *About Warwick* which is a very good instance of what was probably his usual state of mind. He is speaking of the aspect of the High Street of the town.

“The street is an emblem of England itself. What seems new in it is chiefly a skilful and fortunate adaptation of what such a people as ourselves would destroy. The new things are based and supported on sturdy old things, and derive a massive strength from their deep and immemorial

foundations, though with such limitations and impediments as only an Englishman could endure. But he likes to feel the weight of all the past upon his back ; and, moreover, the antiquity that overburdens him has taken root in his being, and has grown to be rather a hump than a pack, so that there is no getting rid of it without tearing his whole structure to pieces. In my judgment, as he appears to be sufficiently comfortable under the mouldy accretion, he had better stumble on with it as long as he can. He presents a spectacle which is by no means without its charm for a disinterested and unincumbered observer."

There is all Hawthorne, with his enjoyment of the picturesque, his relish of chiaroscuro, of local colour, of the deposit of time, and his still greater enjoyment of his own dissociation from these things, his "disinterested and unincumbered" condition. His want of incumbrances may seem at times to give him a somewhat naked and attenuated appearance, but, on the whole, he carries it off very well. I have said that *Our Old Home* contains much of his best writing, and on turning over the book at hazard, I am struck with his frequent felicity of phrase. At every step there is something one would like to quote—something excellently well said. These things are often of the lighter sort, but Hawthorne's charming diction lingers in the memory—almost in the ear. I have always remembered a certain admirable characterisation of Doctor Johnson, in the account of the writer's visit to Lichfield—and I will preface it by a paragraph almost as good, commemorating the charms of the hotel in that interesting town.

"At any rate, I had the great, dull, dingy, and dreary coffee-room, with its heavy old mahogany chairs and tables, all to myself, and not a soul to exchange a word with except

the waiter, who, like most of his class in England, had evidently left his conversational abilities uncultivated. No former practice of solitary living, nor habits of reticence, nor well-tested self-dependence for occupation of mind and amusement, can quite avail, as I now proved, to dissipate the ponderous gloom of an English coffee-room under such circumstances as these, with no book at hand save the county directory, nor any newspaper but a torn local journal of five days ago. So I buried myself betimes in a huge heap of ancient feathers (there is no other kind of bed in these old inns), let my head sink into an unsubstantial pillow, and slept a stifled sleep, compounded of the night-troubles of all my predecessors in that same unrestful couch. And when I awoke, the odour of a bygone century was in my nostrils—a faint, elusive smell, of which I never had any conception before crossing the Atlantic.”

The whole chapter, entitled “Lichfield and Uttoxeter,” is a sort of graceful tribute to Samuel Johnson, who certainly has nowhere else been more tenderly spoken of.

“Beyond all question I might have had a wiser friend than he. The atmosphere in which alone he breathed was dense: his awful dread of death showed how much muddy imperfection was to be cleansed out of him before he could be capable of spiritual existence; he meddled only with the surface of life, and never cared to penetrate further than to ploughshare depth; his very sense and sagacity were but a one-eyed clear-sightedness. I laughed at him, sometimes standing beside his knee. And yet, considering that my native propensities were towards Fairy Land, and also how much yeast is generally mixed up with the mental sustenance of a New Englander, it may not have been altogether amiss, in those childish and boyish days, to keep pace with this heavy-footed traveller, and feed on the gross diet that he carried in his knapsack. It is wholesome food even now! And then, how English! Many of the latent sympathies

that enabled me to enjoy the Old Country so well, and that so readily amalgamated themselves with the American ideas that seemed most adverse to them, may have been derived from, or fostered and kept alive by, the great English moralist. Never was a descriptive epithet more nicely appropriate than that! Doctor Johnson's morality was as English an article as a beef-steak."

And for mere beauty of expression I cannot forbear quoting this passage about the days in a fine English summer.

"For each day seemed endless, though never wearisome. As far as your actual experience is concerned, the English summer day has positively no beginning and no end. When you awake, at any reasonable hour, the sun is already shining through the curtains; you live through unnumbered hours of Sabbath quietude, with a calm variety of incident softly etched upon their tranquil lapse; and at length you become conscious that it is bedtime again, while there is still enough daylight in the sky to make the pages of your book distinctly legible. Night, if there be any such season, hangs down a transparent veil through which the bygone day beholds its successor; or if not quite true of the latitude of London, it may be soberly affirmed of the more northern parts of the island that To-morrow is born before its Yesterday is dead. They exist together in the golden twilight, where the decrepit old day dimly discerns the face of the ominous infant; and you, though a mere mortal, may simultaneously touch them both, with one finger of recollection and another of prophecy."

The Note-Books, as I have said, deal chiefly with the superficial aspect of English life, and describe the material objects with which the author was surrounded. They often describe them admirably, and the rural beauty of the country has never been more happily expressed. But

there are inevitably a great many reflections and incidental judgments, characterisations of people he met, fragments of psychology and social criticism, and it is here that Hawthorne's mixture of subtlety and simplicity, his interfusion of genius with what I have ventured to call the provincial quality, is most apparent. To an American reader this latter quality, which is never grossly manifested, but pervades the Journals like a vague natural perfume, an odour of purity and kindness and integrity, must always, for a reason that I will touch upon, have a considerable charm; and such a reader will accordingly take an even greater satisfaction in the Diaries kept during the two years Hawthorne spent in Italy; for in these volumes the element I speak of is especially striking. He resigned his consulate at Liverpool towards the close of 1857—whether because he was weary of his manner of life there and of the place itself, as may well have been, or because he wished to anticipate supersession by the new government (Mr. Buchanan's) which was just establishing itself at Washington, is not apparent from the slender sources of information from which these pages have been compiled. In the month of January of the following year he betook himself, with his family, to the Continent, and, as promptly as possible, made the best of his way to Rome. He spent the remainder of the winter and the spring there, and then went to Florence for the summer and autumn; after which he returned to Rome and passed a second season. His Italian Note-Books are very pleasant reading, but they are of less interest than the others; for his contact with the life of the country, its people and its manners, was simply that of the ordinary tourist—which amounts to saying that it was extremely superficial. He appears to have suffered a great deal of discomfort

and depression in Rome, and not to have been, on the whole, in the best mood for enjoying the place and its resources. That he did, at one time and another, enjoy these things keenly is proved by his beautiful romance, *Transformation*, which could never have been written by a man who had not had many hours of exquisite appreciation of the lovely land of Italy. But he took it hard, as it were, and suffered himself to be painfully discomposed by the usual accidents of Italian life, as foreigners learn to know it. His future was again uncertain, and during his second winter in Rome he was in danger of losing his elder daughter by a malady which he speaks of as a trouble "that pierced to my very vitals." I may mention, with regard to this painful episode, that Franklin Pierce, whose presidential days were over, and who, like other ex-presidents, was travelling in Europe, came to Rome at the time, and that the Note-Books contain some singularly beautiful and touching allusions to his old friend's gratitude for his sympathy, and enjoyment of his society. The sentiment of friendship has, on the whole, been so much less commemorated in literature than might have been expected from the place it is supposed to hold in life, that there is always something striking in any frank and ardent expression of it. It occupied, in so far as Pierce was the object of it, a large place in Hawthorne's mind, and it is impossible not to feel the manly tenderness of such lines as these:—

"I have found him here in Rome, the whole of my early friend, and even better than I used to know him; a heart as true and affectionate, a mind much widened and deepened by the experience of life. We hold just the same relation to one another as of yore, and we have passed all the turning-off places, and may hope to go on together, still the same

dear friends, as long as we live. I do not love him one whit the less for having been President, nor for having done me the greatest good in his power; a fact that speaks eloquently in his favour, and perhaps says a little for myself. If he had been merely a benefactor, perhaps I might not have borne it so well; but each did his best for the other, as friend for friend."

The Note-Books are chiefly taken up with descriptions of the regular sights and "objects of interest," which we often feel to be rather perfunctory, and a little in the style of the traditional tourists' diary. They abound in charming touches, and every reader of *Transformation* will remember the delightful colouring of the numerous pages in that novel, which are devoted to the pictorial aspects of Rome. But we are unable to rid ourselves of the impression that Hawthorne was a good deal bored by the importunity of Italian art, for which his taste, naturally not keen, had never been cultivated. Occasionally, indeed, he breaks out into explicit sighs and groans, and frankly declares that he washes his hands of it. Already, in England, he had made the discovery that he could easily feel overdosed with such things. "Yesterday," he wrote in 1856, "I went out at about twelve and visited the British Museum; an exceedingly tiresome affair. It quite crushes a person to see so much at once, and I wandered from hall to hall with a weary and heavy heart, wishing (Heaven forgive me!) that the Elgin marbles and the frieze of the Parthenon were all burnt into lime, and that the granite Egyptian statues were hewn and squared into building-stones."

The plastic sense was not strong in Hawthorne; there can be no better proof of it than his curious aversion to the representation of the nude in sculpture. This aversion

was deep-seated; he constantly returns to it, exclaiming upon the incongruity of modern artists making naked figures. He apparently quite failed to see that nudity is not an incident, or accident, of sculpture, but its very essence and principle; and his jealousy of undressed images strikes the reader as a strange, vague, long-dormant heritage of his straight-laced Puritan ancestry. Whenever he talks of statues he makes a great point of the smoothness and whiteness of the marble—speaks of the surface of the marble as if it were half the beauty of the image; and when he discourses of pictures, one feels that the brightness or dinginess of the frame is an essential part of his impression of the work—as he, indeed, somewhere distinctly affirms. Like a good American, he took more pleasure in the productions of Mr. Thompson and Mr. Brown, Mr. Powers and Mr. Hart, American artists who were plying their trade in Italy, than in the works which adorned the ancient museums of the country. He suffered greatly from the cold, and found little charm in the climate, and during the weeks of winter that followed his arrival in Rome he sat shivering by his fire, and wondering why he had come to such a land of misery. Before he left Italy, he wrote to his publisher—"I bitterly detest Rome, and shall rejoice to bid it farewell forever; and I fully acquiesce in all the mischief and ruin that has happened to it, from Nero's conflagration downward. In fact, I wish the very site had been obliterated before I ever saw it." Hawthorne presents himself to the reader of these pages as the last of the old-fashioned Americans—and this is the interest which I just now said that his compatriots would find in his very limitations. I do not mean by this that there are not still many of his fellow-countrymen (as there are many natives of every land under the sun) who are more suscep-

tible of being irritated than of being soothed by the influences of the Eternal City. What I mean is that an American of equal value with Hawthorne, an American of equal genius, imagination, and, as our forefathers said, sensibility, would at present inevitably accommodate himself more easily to the idiosyncrasies of foreign lands. An American as cultivated as Hawthorne, is now almost inevitably more cultivated, and, as a matter of course, more Europeanised in advance, more cosmopolitan. It is very possible that in becoming so he has lost something of his occidental savour, the quality which excites the good-will of the American reader of our author's Journals for the dislocated, depressed, even slightly-bewildered diarist. Absolutely the last of the earlier race of Americans Hawthorne was, fortunately, probably far from being. But I think of him as the last specimen of the more primitive type of man of letters; and when it comes to measuring what he succeeded in being, in his unadulterated form, against what he failed of being, the positive side of the image quite extinguishes the negative. I must be on my guard, however, against incurring the charge of cherishing a national consciousness as acute as I have ventured to pronounce his own.

Out of his mingled sensations, his pleasure and his weariness, his discomforts and his reveries, there sprang another beautiful work. During the summer of 1858, he hired a picturesque old villa on the hill of Bellosguardo, near Florence, a curious structure with a crenelated tower, which, after having in the course of its career suffered many vicissitudes and played many parts, now finds its most vivid identity in being pointed out to strangers as the sometime residence of the celebrated American romancer. Hawthorne took a fancy to the place, as well he might, for it is one of the loveliest spots on earth, and the

great view that stretched itself before him contains every element of beauty. Florence lay at his feet, with her memories and treasures; the olive-coloured hills bloomed around him, studded with villas as picturesque as his own; the Apennines, perfect in form and colour, disposed themselves opposite; and in the distance, along its fertile valley, the Arno wandered to Pisa and the sea. Soon after coming hither he wrote to a friend in a strain of high satisfaction.

“It is pleasant to feel at last that I am really away from America—a satisfaction that I never really enjoyed as long as I stayed in Liverpool, where it seemed to be that the quintessence of nasal and hand-shaking Yankeeism was gradually filtered and sublimated through my consulate, on the way outward and homeward. I first got acquainted with my own countrymen there. At Rome, too, it was not much better. But here in Florence, and in the summer-time, and in this secluded villa, I have escaped out of all my old tracks, and am really remote. I like my present residence immensely. The house stands on a hill, overlooking Florence, and is big enough to quarter a regiment, insomuch that each member of the family, including servants, has a separate suite of apartments, and there are vast wildernesses of upper rooms into which we have never yet sent exploring expeditions. At one end of the house there is a moss-grown tower, haunted by owls and by the ghost of a monk who was confined there in the thirteenth century, previous to being burnt at the stake in the principal square of Florence. I hire this villa, tower and all, at twenty-eight dollars a month; but I mean to take it away bodily and clap it into a romance, which I have in my head, ready to be written out.”

This romance was *Transformation*, which he wrote out during the following winter in Rome, and re-wrote during the several months that he spent in England, chiefly at Leamington, before returning to America. The Villa Mon-

tauto figures, in fact, in this tale as the castle of Monte-Beni, the patrimonial dwelling of the hero. "I take some credit to myself," he wrote to the same friend, on returning to Rome, "for having sternly shut myself up for an hour or two every day, and come to close grips with a romance which I have been trying to tear out of my mind." And later in the same winter he says—"I shall go home, I fear, with a heavy heart, not expecting to be very well contented there. . . . If I were but a hundred times richer than I am, how very comfortable I could be ! I consider it a great piece of good fortune that I have had experience of the discomforts and miseries of Italy, and did not go directly home from England. Anything will seem like a Paradise after a Roman winter." But he got away at last, late in the spring, carrying his novel with him, and the book was published, after, as I say, he had worked it over, mainly during some weeks that he passed at the little watering-place of Redcar, on the Yorkshire coast, in February of the following year. It was issued primarily in England ; the American edition immediately followed. It is an odd fact that in the two countries the book came out under different titles. The title that the author had bestowed upon it did not satisfy the English publishers, who requested him to provide it with another ; so that it is only in America that the work bears the name of *The Marble Faun*. Hawthorne's choice of this appellation is, by the way, rather singular, for it completely fails to characterise the story, the subject of which is the living faun, the faun of flesh and blood, the unfortunate Donatello. His marble counterpart is mentioned only in the opening chapter. On the other hand, Hawthorne complained that *Transformation* "gives one the idea of Harlequin in a pantomime." Under either name, however, the

book was a great success, and it has probably become the most popular of Hawthorne's four novels. It is part of the intellectual equipment of the Anglo-Saxon visitor to Rome, and is read by every English-speaking traveller who arrives there, who has been there, or who expects to go.

It has a great deal of beauty, of interest and grace; but it has, to my sense, a slighter value than its companions, and I am far from regarding it as the masterpiece of the author, a position to which we sometimes hear it assigned. The subject is admirable, and so are many of the details; but the whole thing is less simple and complete than either of the three tales of American life, and Hawthorne forfeited a precious advantage in ceasing to tread his native soil. Half the virtue of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* is in their local quality; they are impregnated with the New England air. It is very true that Hawthorne had no pretension to portray actualities, and to cultivate that literal exactitude which is now the fashion. Had this been the case, he would probably have made a still graver mistake in transporting the scene of his story to a country which he knew only superficially. His tales all go on more or less "in the vague," as the French say, and of course the vague may as well be placed in Tuscany as in Massachusetts. It may also very well be urged in Hawthorne's favour here, that in *Transformation* he has attempted to deal with actualities more than he did in either of his earlier novels. He has described the streets and monuments of Rome with a closeness which forms no part of his reference to those of Boston and Salem. But for all this he incurs that penalty of seeming factitious and unauthoritative, which is always the result of an artist's attempt to project himself into an atmosphere in which he has not a transmitted and inherited property. An English

or a German writer (I put poets aside) may love Italy well enough, and know her well enough, to write delightful fictions about her; the thing has often been done. But the productions in question will, as novels, always have about them something second-rate and imperfect. There is in *Transformation* enough beautiful perception of the interesting character of Rome, enough rich and eloquent expression of it, to save the book, if the book could be saved; but the style, what the French call the *genre*, is an inferior one, and the thing remains a charming romance with intrinsic weaknesses.

Allowing for this, however, some of the finest pages in all Hawthorne are to be found in it. The subject, as I have said, is a particularly happy one, and there is a great deal of interest in the simple combination and opposition of the four actors. It is noticeable that, in spite of the considerable length of the story, there are no accessory figures; Donatello and Miriam, Kenyon and Hilda exclusively occupy the scene. This is the more noticeable as the scene is very large, and the great Roman background is constantly presented to us. The relations of these four people are full of that moral picturesqueness which Hawthorne was always looking for; he found it in perfection in the history of Donatello. As I have said, the novel is the most popular of his works, and every one will remember the figure of the simple, joyous, sensuous young Italian, who is not so much a man as a child, and not so much a child as a charming, innocent animal, and how he is brought to self-knowledge, and to a miserable conscious manhood, by the commission of a crime. Donatello is rather vague and impalpable; he says too little in the book, shows himself too little, and falls short, I think, of being a creation. But he is enough of a creation to make us enter into the situa-

tion, and the whole history of his rise, or fall, whichever one chooses to call it—his tasting of the tree of knowledge, and finding existence complicated with a regret—is unfolded with a thousand ingenious and exquisite touches. Of course, to make the interest complete, there is a woman in the affair; and Hawthorne has done few things more beautiful than the picture of the unequal complicity of guilt between his immature and dimly-puzzled hero, with his clinging, unquestioning, unexacting devotion, and the dark, powerful, more widely-seeing feminine nature of Miriam. Deeply touching is the representation of the manner in which these two essentially different persons—the woman intelligent, passionate, acquainted with life, and with a tragic element in her own career; the youth ignorant, gentle, unworldly, brightly and harmlessly natural—are equalised and bound together by their common secret, which insulates them, morally, from the rest of mankind. The character of Hilda has always struck me as an admirable invention—one of those things that mark the man of genius. It needed a man of genius and of Hawthorne's imaginative delicacy, to feel the propriety of such a figure as Hilda's, and to perceive the relief it would both give and borrow. This pure and somewhat rigid New England girl, following the vocation of a copyist of pictures in Rome, unacquainted with evil and untouched by impurity, has been accidentally the witness, unknown and unsuspected, of the dark deed by which her friends, Miriam and Donatello, are knit together. This is *her* revelation of evil, her loss of perfect innocence. She has done no wrong, and yet wrong-doing has become a part of her experience, and she carries the weight of her detested knowledge upon her heart. She carries it a long time, saddened and oppressed by it, till at last she can bear it

no longer. If I have called the whole idea of the presence and effect of Hilda in the story a trait of genius, the purest touch of inspiration is the episode in which the poor girl deposits her burden. She has passed the whole lonely summer in Rome; and one day, at the end of it, finding herself in St. Peter's, she enters a confessional, strenuous daughter of the Puritans as she is, and pours out her dark knowledge into the bosom of the church—then comes away with her conscience lightened, not a whit the less a Puritan than before. If the book contained nothing else noteworthy but this admirable scene, and the pages describing the murder committed by Donatello under Miriam's eyes, and the ecstatic wandering, afterwards, of the guilty couple through the "blood-stained streets of Rome," it would still deserve to rank high among the imaginative productions of our day.

Like all of Hawthorne's things, it contains a great many light threads of symbolism, which shimmer in the texture of the tale, but which are apt to break and remain in our fingers if we attempt to handle them. These things are part of Hawthorne's very manner—almost, as one might say, of his vocabulary; they belong much more to the surface of his work than to its stronger interest. The fault of *Transformation* is that the element of the unreal is pushed too far, and that the book is neither positively of one category nor of another. His "moonshiny romance," he calls it in a letter; and, in truth, the lunar element is a little too pervasive. The action wavers between the streets of Rome, whose literal features the author perpetually sketches, and a vague realm of fancy, in which quite a different verisimilitude prevails. This is the trouble with Donatello himself. His companions are intended to be real—if they fail to be so, it is not for want of intention;

whereas he is intended to be real or not, as you please. He is of a different substance from them; it is as if a painter, in composing a picture, should try to give you an impression of one of his figures by a strain of music. The idea of the modern faun was a charming one; but I think it a pity that the author should not have made him more definitely modern, without reverting so much to his mythological properties and antecedents, which are very gracefully touched upon, but which belong to the region of picturesque conceits, much more than to that of real psychology. Among the young Italians of to-day there are still plenty of models for such an image as Hawthorne appears to have wished to present in the easy and natural Donatello. And since I am speaking critically, I may go on to say that the art of narration, in *Transformation*, seems to me more at fault than in the author's other novels. The story straggles and wanders, is dropped and taken up again, and towards the close lapses into an almost fatal vagueness.

CHAPTER VII.

LAST YEARS.

OF the four last years of Hawthorne's life there is not much to tell that I have not already told. He returned to America in the summer of 1860, and took up his abode in the house he had bought at Concord before going to Europe, and of which his occupancy had as yet been brief. He was to occupy it only four years. I have insisted upon the fact of his being an intense American, and of his looking at all things, during his residence in Europe, from the standpoint of that little clod of Western earth which he carried about with him as the good Mohammedan carries the strip of carpet on which he kneels down to face towards Mecca. But it does not appear, nevertheless, that he found himself treading with any great exhilaration the larger section of his native soil upon which, on his return, he disembarked. Indeed, the closing part of his life was a period of dejection, the more acute that it followed directly upon seven years of the happiest opportunities he was to have known. And his European residence had been brightest at the last; he had broken almost completely with those habits of extreme seclusion into which he was to relapse on his return to Concord. "You would be stricken dumb," he writes from London, shortly before

leaving it for the last time, "to see how quietly I accept a whole string of invitations, and, what is more, perform my engagements without a murmur. . . . The stir of this London life, somehow or other," he adds in the same letter, "has done me a wonderful deal of good, and I feel better than for months past. This is strange, for if I had my choice I should leave undone almost all the things I do." "When he found himself once more on the old ground," writes Mr. Lathrop, "with the old struggle for subsistence staring him in the face again, it is not difficult to conceive how a certain degree of depression would follow." There is, indeed, not a little sadness in the thought of Hawthorne's literary gift—light, delicate, exquisite, capricious, never too abundant, being charged with the heavy burden of the maintenance of a family. We feel that it was not intended for such grossness, and that in a world ideally constituted he would have enjoyed a liberal pension, an assured subsistence, and have been able to produce his charming prose only when the fancy took him.

The brightness of the outlook at home was not made greater by the explosion of the Civil War in the spring of 1861. These months, and the three years that followed them, were not a cheerful time for any persons but army-contractors; but over Hawthorne the war-cloud appears to have dropped a permanent shadow. The whole affair was a bitter disappointment to him, and a fatal blow to that happy faith in the uninterruptedness of American prosperity which I have spoken of as the religion of the old-fashioned American in general, and the old-fashioned Democrat in particular. It was not a propitious time for cultivating the Muse; when history herself is so hard at work, fiction has little left to say. To fiction, directly, Hawthorne did not address himself; he composed first,

chiefly during the year 1862, the chapters of which our *Our Old Home* was afterwards made up. I have said that, though this work has less value than his purely imaginative things, the writing is singularly good, and it is well to remember, to its greater honour, that it was produced at a time when it was painfully hard for a man of Hawthorne's cast of mind to fix his attention. The air was full of battle-smoke, and the poet's vision was not easily clear. Hawthorne was irritated, too, by the sense of being to a certain extent, politically considered, in a false position. A large section of the Democratic party was not in good odour at the North; its loyalty was not perceived to be of that clear strain which public opinion required. To this wing of the party Franklin Pierce had, with reason or without, the credit of belonging; and our author was conscious of some sharpness of responsibility in defending the illustrious friend of whom he had already made himself the advocate. He defended him manfully, without a grain of concession, and described the ex-President to the public (and to himself), if not as he was, then as he ought to be. *Our Old Home* is dedicated to him, and about this dedication there was some little difficulty. It was represented to Hawthorne that as General Pierce was rather out of fashion, it might injure the success, and, in plain terms, the sale of his book. His answer (to his publisher) was much to the point.

"I find that it would be a piece of poltroonery in me to withdraw either the dedication or the dedicatory letter. My long and intimate personal relations with Pierce render the dedication altogether proper, especially as regards this book, which would have had no existence without his kindness; and if he is so exceedingly unpopular that his name ought to sink the volume, there is so much the more need that an old

friend should stand by him. I cannot, merely on account of pecuniary profit on literary reputation, go back from what I have deliberately felt and thought it right to do; and if I were to tear out the dedication I should never look at the volume again without remorse and shame. As for the literary public, it must accept my book precisely as I think fit to give it, or let it alone. Nevertheless, I have no fancy for making myself a martyr when it is honourably and conscientiously possible to avoid it; and I always measure out heroism very accurately according to the exigencies of the occasion, and should be the last man in the world to throw away a bit of it needlessly. So I have looked over the concluding paragraph, and have amended it in such a way that, while doing what I know to be justice to my friend, it contains not a word that ought to be objectionable to any set of readers. If the public of the North see fit to ostracise me for this, I can only say that I would gladly sacrifice a thousand or two dollars, rather than retain the good-will of such a herd of dolts and mean-spirited scoundrels."

The dedication was published, the book was eminently successful, and Hawthorne was not ostracised. The paragraph under discussion stands as follows: "Only this let me say, that, with the record of your life in my memory, and with a sense of your character in my deeper consciousness, as among the few things that time has left as it found them, I need no assurance that you continue faithful forever to that grand idea of an irrevocable Union which, as you once told me, was the earliest that your brave father taught you. For other men there may be a choice of paths—for you but one; and it rests among my certainties that no man's loyalty is more steadfast, no man's hopes or apprehensions on behalf of our national existence more deeply heartfelt, or more closely intertwined with his possibilities of personal happiness, than those of Franklin

Pierce." I know not how well the ex-President liked these lines, but the public thought them admirable, for they served as a kind of formal profession of faith, on the question of the hour, by a loved and honoured writer. That some of his friends thought such a profession needed is apparent from the numerous editorial ejaculations and protests appended to an article describing a visit he had just paid to Washington, which Hawthorne contributed to the *Atlantic Monthly* for July, 1862, and which, singularly enough, has not been reprinted. The article has all the usual merit of such sketches on Hawthorne's part—the merit of delicate, sportive feeling, expressed with consummate grace—but the editor of the periodical appears to have thought that he must give the antidote with the poison, and the paper is accompanied with several little notes disclaiming all sympathy with the writer's political heresies. The heresies strike the reader of to-day as extremely mild, and what excites his emotion, rather, is the questionable taste of the editorial commentary, with which it is strange that Hawthorne should have allowed his article to be encumbered. He had not been an Abolitionist before the War, and that he should not pretend to be one at the eleventh hour, was, for instance, surely a piece of consistency that might have been allowed to pass. "I shall not pretend to be an admirer of old John Brown," he says, in a page worth quoting, "any further than sympathy with Whittier's excellent ballad about him may go; nor did I expect ever to shrink so unutterably from any apophthegm of a sage whose happy lips have uttered a hundred golden sentences"—the allusion here, I suppose, is to Mr. Emerson—"as from that saying (perhaps falsely attributed to so honoured a name), that the death of this blood-stained fanatic has 'made the Gallows as venerable

as the Cross!" Nobody was ever more justly hanged. He won his martyrdom fairly, and took it fairly. He himself, I am persuaded (such was his natural integrity), would have acknowledged that Virginia had a right to take the life which he had staked and lost; although it would have been better for her, in the hour that is fast coming, if she could generously have forgotten the criminality of his attempt in its enormous folly. On the other hand, any common-sensible man, looking at the matter unsentimentally, must have felt a certain intellectual satisfaction in seeing him hanged, if it were only in requital of his preposterous miscalculation of possibilities." Now that the heat of that great conflict has passed away, this is a capital expression of the saner estimate, in the United States, of the dauntless and deluded old man who proposed to solve a complex political problem by stirring up a servile insurrection. There is much of the same sound sense, interfused with light, just appreciable irony, in such a passage as the following:

"I tried to imagine how very disagreeable the presence of a Southern army would be in a sober town of Massachusetts; and the thought considerably lessened my wonder at the cold and shy regards that are cast upon our troops, the gloom, the sullen demeanour, the declared, or scarcely hidden, sympathy with rebellion, which are so frequent here. It is a strange thing in human life that the greatest errors both of men and women often spring from their sweetest and most generous qualities; and so, undoubtedly, thousands of warm-hearted, generous, and impulsive persons have joined the Rebels, not from any real zeal for the cause, but because, between two conflicting loyalties, they chose that which necessarily lay nearest the heart. There never existed any other Government against which treason was so easy, and could defend itself by such plausible arguments as against that of the United

States. The anomaly of two allegiances (of which that of the State comes nearest home to a man's feeling, and includes the altar and the hearth, while the General Government claims his devotion only to an airy mode of law, and has no symbol but a flag) is exceedingly mischievous in this point of view ; for it has converted crowds of honest people into traitors, who seem to themselves not merely innocent but patriotic, and who die for a bad cause with a quiet conscience, as if it were the best. In the vast extent of our country—too vast by far to be taken into one small human heart—we inevitably limit to our own State, or at farthest, to our own little section, that sentiment of physical love for the soil which renders an Englishman, for example, so intensely sensitive to the dignity and well-being of his little island, that one hostile foot, treading anywhere upon it, would make a bruise on each individual breast. If a man loves his own State, therefore, and is content to be ruined with her, let us shoot him if we can, but allow him an honourable burial in the soil he fights for."

To this paragraph a line of deprecation from the editor is attached; and indeed, from the point of view of a vigorous prosecution of the war, it was doubtless not particularly pertinent. But it is interesting as an example of the way an imaginative man judges current events—trying to see the other side as well as his own, to feel what his adversary feels, and present his view of the case.

But he had other occupations for his imagination than putting himself into the shoes of unappreciative Southerners. He began at this time two novels, neither of which he lived to finish, but both of which were published, as fragments, after his death. The shorter of these fragments, to which he had given the name of *The Dolliver Romance*, is so very brief that little can be said of it. The author strikes, with all his usual sweetness, the opening

notes of a story of New England life, and the few pages which have been given to the world contain a charming picture of an old man and a child.

The other rough sketch—it is hardly more—is in a manner complete; it was unfortunately deemed complete enough to be brought out in a magazine as a serial novel. This was to do it a great wrong, and I do not go too far in saying that poor Hawthorne would probably not have enjoyed the very bright light that has been projected upon this essentially crude piece of work. I am at a loss to know how to speak of *Septimius Felton, or the Elixir of Life*; I have purposely reserved but a small space for doing so, for the part of discretion seems to be to pass it by lightly. I differ, therefore, widely from the author's biographer and son-in-law in thinking it a work of the greatest weight and value, offering striking analogies with Goethe's *Faust*; and still more widely from a critic whom Mr. Lathrop quotes, who regards a certain portion of it as "one of the very greatest triumphs in all literature." It seems to me almost cruel to pitch in this exalted key one's estimate of the rough first draught of a tale in regard to which the author's premature death operates, virtually, as a complete renunciation of pretensions. It is plain to any reader that *Septimius Felton*, as it stands, with its roughness, its gaps, its mere allusiveness and slightness of treatment, gives us but a very partial measure of Hawthorne's full intention; and it is equally easy to believe that this intention was much finer than anything we find in the book. Even if we possessed the novel in its complete form, however, I incline to think that we should regard it as very much the weakest of Hawthorne's productions. The idea itself seems a failure, and the best that might have come of it would have been very much below *The*

Scarlet Letter or *The House of the Seven Gables*. The appeal to our interest is not felicitously made, and the fancy of a potion, to assure eternity of existence, being made from the flowers which spring from the grave of a man whom the distiller of the potion has deprived of life, though it might figure with advantage in a short story of the pattern of the *Twice-Told Tales*, appears too slender to carry the weight of a novel. Indeed, this whole matter of elixirs and potions belongs to the fairy-tale period of taste, and the idea of a young man enabling himself to live forever by concocting and imbibing a magic draught has the misfortune of not appealing to our sense of reality, or even to our sympathy. The weakness of *Septimius Felton* is that the reader cannot take the hero seriously—a fact of which there can be no better proof than the element of the ridiculous which inevitably mingles itself in the scene in which he entertains his lady-love with a prophetic sketch of his occupations during the successive centuries of his earthly immortality. I suppose the answer to my criticism is, that this is allegorical, symbolic, ideal; but we feel that it symbolises nothing substantial, and that the truth—whatever it may be—that it illustrates is as moonshiny, to use Hawthorne's own expression, as the allegory itself. Another fault of the story is, that a great historical event—the war of the Revolution—is introduced in the first few pages, in order to supply the hero with a pretext for killing the young man from whose grave the flower of immortality is to sprout, and then drops out of the narrative altogether, not even forming a background to the sequel. It seems to me that Hawthorne should either have invented some other occasion for the death of his young officer, or else, having struck the note of the great public agitation which overhung his

little group of characters, have been careful to sound it through the rest of his tale. I do wrong, however, to insist upon these things, for I fall thereby into the error of treating the work as if it had been cast into its ultimate form and acknowledged by the author. To avoid this error, I shall make no other criticism of details, but content myself with saying that the idea and intention of the book appear, relatively speaking, feeble, and that, even had it been finished, it would have occupied a very different place in the public esteem from the writer's masterpieces.

The year 1864 brought with it for Hawthorne a sense of weakness and depression from which he had little relief during the four or five months that were left him of life. He had his engagement to produce *The Dolliver Romance*, which had been promised to the subscribers of the *Atlantic Monthly* (it was the first time he had undertaken to publish a work of fiction in monthly parts), but he was unable to write, and his consciousness of an unperformed task weighed upon him, and did little to dissipate his physical inertness. "I have not yet had courage to read the Dolliver proof-sheet," he wrote to his publisher in December, 1863; "but will set about it soon, though with terrible reluctance, such as I never felt before. I am most grateful to you," he went on, "for protecting me from that visitation of the elephant and his cub. If you happen to see Mr. —, of L—, a young man who was here last summer, pray tell him anything your conscience will let you, to induce him to spare me another visit, which I know he intended. I really am not well, and cannot be disturbed by strangers, without more suffering than it is worth while to endure." A month later he was obliged to ask for a further postponement. "I am not quite up to writing yet, but shall make an effort as soon as I see

any hope of success. You ought to be thankful that (like most other broken-down authors) I do not pester you with decrepit pages, and insist upon your accepting them as full of the old spirit and vigour. That trouble, perhaps, still awaits you, after I shall have reached a further stage of decay. Seriously, my mind has, for the time, lost its temper and its fine edge, and I have an instinct that I had better keep quiet. Perhaps I shall have a new spirit of vigour if I wait quietly for it; perhaps not." The winter passed away, but the "new spirit of vigour" remained absent; and at the end of February he wrote to Mr. Fields that his novel had simply broken down, and that he should never finish it. "I hardly know what to say to the public about this abortive romance, though I know pretty well what the case will be. I shall never finish it. Yet it is not quite pleasant for an author to announce himself, or to be announced, as finally broken down as to his literary faculty. . . . I cannot finish it unless a great change comes over me; and if I make too great an effort to do so, it will be my death; not that I should care much for that, if I could fight the battle through and win it, thus ending a life of much smoulder and a scanty fire in a blaze of glory. But I should smother myself in mud of my own making. . . . I am not low-spirited, nor fanciful, nor freakish, but look what seem to me realities in the face, and am ready to take whatever may come. If I could but go to England now, I think that the sea-voyage and the 'old Home' might set me all right."

But he was not to go to England; he started three months later upon a briefer journey, from which he never returned. His health was seriously disordered, and in April, according to a letter from Mrs. Hawthorne, printed by Mr. Fields, he had been "miserably ill." His feebleness

was complete; he appears to have had no definite malady, but he was, according to the common phrase, failing. General Pierce proposed to him that they should make a little tour together among the mountains of New Hampshire, and Hawthorne consented, in the hope of getting some profit from the change of air. The Northern New England spring is not the most genial season in the world, and this was an indifferent substitute for the resource for which his wife had, on his behalf, expressed a wish—a visit to “some island in the Gulf Stream.” He was not to go far; he only reached a little place called Plymouth, one of the stations of approach to the beautiful mountain-scenery of New Hampshire, when, on the 18th of May, 1864, death overtook him. His companion, General Pierce, going into his room in the early morning, found that he had breathed his last during the night—had passed away, tranquilly, comfortably, without a sign or a sound, in his sleep. This happened at the hotel of the place—a vast white edifice adjacent to the railway-station, and entitled the Pemigewasset House. He was buried at Concord, and many of the most distinguished men in the country stood by his grave.

He was a beautiful, natural, original genius, and his life had been singularly exempt from worldly preoccupations and vulgar efforts. It had been as pure, as simple, as unsophisticated, as his work. He had lived primarily in his domestic affections, which were of the tenderest kind; and then—without eagerness, without pretension, but with a great deal of quiet devotion—in his charming art. His work will remain; it is too original and exquisite to pass away; among the men of imagination he will always have his niche. No one has had just that vision of life, and no one has had a literary form that more successfully express-

ed his vision. He was not a moralist, and he was not simply a poet. The moralists are weightier, denser, richer, in a sense; the poets are more purely inconclusive and irresponsible. He combined in a singular degree the spontaneity of the imagination with a haunting care for moral problems. Man's conscience was his theme, but he saw it in the light of a creative fancy which added, out of its own substance, an interest, and, I may almost say, an importance.

THE END.

CARLYLE

BY

JOHN NICHOL

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE following record of the leading events of Carlyle's life and attempt to estimate his genius rely on frequently renewed study of his work, on slight personal impressions—"vidi tantum"—and on information supplied by previous narrators. Of these the great author's chosen literary legatee is the most eminent and, in the main, the most reliable. Every critic of Carlyle must admit as constant obligations to Mr. Froude as every critic of Byron to Moore or of Scott to Lockhart. The works of these masters in biography remain the ample storehouses from which every student will continue to draw. Each has, in a sense, made his subject his own, and each has been similarly arraigned.

I must here be allowed to express a feeling akin to indignation at the persistent, often virulent attacks directed against a loyal friend, betrayed, it may be, by excess of faith and the defective reticence that often belongs to genius, to publish too much about his hero. But Mr. Froude's quotation, in defence, from the essay on *Sir Walter Scott* requires no supplement: it should be remembered that he acted with the most ample authority; that the restrictions under which he was at first entrusted with the MSS. of the *Reminiscences* and the *Letters and Memorials* (annotated by Carlyle himself, as if for publi-

cation) were withdrawn; and that the initial permission to select finally approached a practical injunction to communicate the whole. The worst that can be said is that, in the last years of Carlyle's career, his own judgment as to what should be made public of the details of his domestic life may have been somewhat obscured; but, if so, it was a weakness easily hidden from a devotee.

My acknowledgments are due for several of the Press comments which appeared shortly after Carlyle's death, more especially that of the *St. James's Gazette*, giving the most philosophical brief summary of his religious views which I have seen; and for the kindness of Dr. Eugene Oswald, President of the Carlyle Society, in revising my proof-sheets, and supplying me with numerous valuable hints, especially in matters relating to German History and Literature. I have also to thank the Editor of the *Manchester Guardian* for permitting me to reproduce the substance of my article in its columns of February, 1881. That article was largely based on a contribution on the same subject, in 1859, to Mackenzie's *Imperial Dictionary of Biography*.

I may add that in the distribution of material over the comparatively short space at my command, I have endeavoured to give prominence to facts less generally known, and passed over slightly the details of events previously enlarged on, as the terrible accident to Mrs. Carlyle and the incidents of her death. To her inner history I have only referred in so far as it had a direct bearing on her husband's life. As regards the itinerary of Carlyle's foreign journeys, it has seemed to me that it might be of interest to those travelling in Germany to have a short record of the places where the author sought his "studies" for his greatest work.

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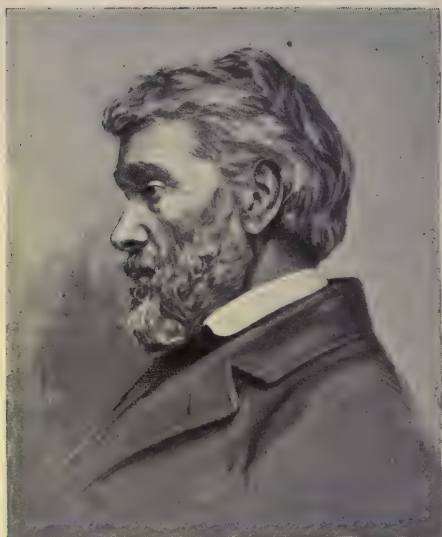
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THOMAS CARLYLE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY.

FOUR SCOTCHMEN, born within the limits of the same hundred years, all in the first rank of writers, if not of thinkers, represent much of the spirit of four successive generations. They are leading links in an intellectual chain.

DAVID HUME (1711–1776) remains the most salient type, in our island, of the scepticism, half conservative, half destructive, but never revolutionary, which marked the third quarter of the eighteenth century. He had some points of intellectual contact with Voltaire, though substituting a staid temper and passionless logic for the incisive brilliancy of a mocking Mercury; he had no relation, save an unhappy personal one, to Rousseau.

ROBERT BURNS (1759–1796), last of great lyrists inspired by a local genius, keenest of popular satirists, narrative poet of the people, spokesman of their higher as of their lower natures, stood on the verge between two eras. Half Jacobite, nursling of old minstrelsy, he was also half Jacobin, an early-born child of the upheaval that closed

the century; as essentially a foe of Calvinism as Hume himself. Master musician of his race, he was, as Thomas Campbell notes, severed, for good and ill, from his fellow Scots by an utter want of their protecting or paralysing caution.

WALTER SCOTT (1771–1832), broadest and most generous, if not loftiest of the group—"no sounder piece of British manhood," says Carlyle himself in his inadequate review, "was put together in that century"—the great revivalist of the mediæval past, lighting up its scenes with a magic glamour, the wizard of northern tradition, was also, like Burns, the humorist of contemporary life. Dealing with Feudal themes, but in the manner of the Romantic school, he was the heir of the Troubadours, the sympathetic peer of Byron, and in his translation of Goetz von Berlichingen he laid the first rafters of our bridge to Germany.

THOMAS CARLYLE (1795–1881) is on the whole the strongest, though far from the finest spirit of the age succeeding—an age of criticism threatening to crowd creation out, of jostling interests and of surging streams, some of which he has striven to direct, more to stem. Even now what Mill twenty-five years ago wrote of Coleridge is still true of Carlyle: "The reading public is apt to be divided between those to whom his views are everything and those to whom they are nothing." But it is possible to extricate from a mass of often turbid eloquence the strands of his thought and to measure his influence by indicating its range.

Travellers in the Hartz, ascending the Brocken, are in certain atmospheres startled by the apparition of a shadowy figure—a giant image of themselves, thrown on the horizon by the dawn. Similar is the relation of Carlyle to the

common types of his countrymen. Burns, despite his fervid patriotism, was in many ways "a starry stranger." Carlyle was Scotch to the core and to the close, in every respect a macrocosm of the higher peasant class of the Lowlanders. Saturated to the last with the spirit of a dismissed creed, he fretted in bonds from which he could never get wholly free. Intrepid, independent, steadfast, frugal, prudent, dauntless, he trampled on the pride of kings with the pride of Lucifer. He was clannish to excess, painfully jealous of proximate rivals, self-centred if not self-seeking, fired by zeal and inflamed by almost mean emulations, resenting benefits as debts, ungenerous—with one exception, that of Goethe—to his intellectual creditors; and, with reference to men and manners around him at variance with himself, violently intolerant. He bore a strange relation to the great poet, in many ways his predecessor in influence, whom with persistent inconsistency he alternately eulogised and disparaged, the half Scot Lord Byron. One had by nature many affinities to the Latin races, the other was purely Teutonic: but the power of both was Titanic rather than Olympian; both were forces of revolution; both protested, in widely different fashion, against the tendency of the age to submerge Individualism; both were to a large extent egoists: the one whining, the other roaring against the "Philistine" restraints of ordinary society. Both had hot hearts, big brains, and an exhaustless store of winged and fiery words; both were wrapt in a measureless discontent, and made constant appeal against what they deemed the shallows of Optimism; Carlylism is the prose rather than "the male of Byronism." The contrasts are, however, obvious; the author of *Sartor Resartus*, however vaguely, defended the System of the Universe; the author of *Cain*, with an

audacity that in its essence went beyond that of Shelley, arraigned it. In both we find vehemence and substantial honesty ; but, in the one, there is a dominant faith, tempered by pride, in the "caste of Vere de Vere," in Freedom for itself—a faith marred by shifting purposes, the garrulous incontinence of vanity, and a broken life ; in the other unwavering belief in Law. The record of their fame is diverse. Byron leapt into the citadel, awoke and found himself the greatest inheritor of an ancient name. Carlyle, a peasant's son, laid slow siege to his eminence, and, only after outliving twice the years of the other, attained it. His career was a struggle, sterner than that of either Johnson or Wordsworth, from obscurity, almost from contempt, to a rarely challenged renown. Fifty years ago few "so poor as do him reverence:" at his death, in a sunset storm of praise, the air was full of him, and deafening was the Babel of the reviews ; for the progress of every original thinker is accompanied by a stream of commentary that swells as it runs till it ends in a dismal swamp of platitude. Carlyle's first recognition was from America, his last from his own countrymen. His teaching came home to their hearts "late in the gloamin'." In Scotland, where, for good or ill, passions are in extremes, he was long howled down, lampooned, preached at, prayed for : till, after his Edinburgh Inaugural Address, he of a sudden became the object of an equally blind devotion ; and was, often by the very men who had tried and condemned him for blasphemy, as senselessly credited with essential orthodoxy. "The stone which the builders rejected became the headstone of the corner," the terror of the pulpit its text. Carlyle's decease was marked by a dirge of rhapsodists whose measureless acclamations stifled the voice of sober criticism. In the realm of contem-

porary English prose he has left no adequate successor;¹ the throne that does not pass by primogeniture is vacant, and the bleak northern skies seem colder and grayer since that venerable head was laid to rest in the village church, far from the smoke and din of the great city on whose streets his figure was long familiar and his name was at last so honored.

Carlyle first saw the world tempest-tossed by the events he celebrates in his earliest History. In its opening pages, we are made to listen to the feet and chariots of "Dubbarridom" hurrying from the "Armida Palace," where Louis XV. and the *ancien régime* lay dying; later to the ticking of the clocks in Launay's doomed Bastile; again to the tocsin of the steeples that roused the singers of the *Marseillaise* to march from "their bright Phocæan city" and grapple with the Swiss guard, last Bulwark of the Bourbons. "The Swiss would have won," the historian characteristically quotes from Napoleon, "if they had had a commander." Already, over little more than the space of the author's life—for he was a contemporary of Keats, born seven months before the death of Burns, Shelley's junior by three, Scott's by four, Byron's by seven years—in the year when Goethe went to feel the pulse of the "cannon-fever" at Argonne—already these sounds are like sounds across a sea. Two whole generations have passed with the memory of half their storms. "Another race has been, and other palms are won." Old policies, governments, councils, creeds, modes and hopes of life have been sifted in strange fires. Assaye, Trafalgar, Austerlitz, Jena, Leipzig, Inkermann, Sadowa, Waterloo when he was twenty and Sedan when he was seventy-five, have been

¹ The nearest being the now foremost prose writers of our time, Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Froude.

fought and won. Born under the French Directory and the Presidency of Washington, Carlyle survived two French empires, two kingdoms, and two republics; elsewhere partitions, abolitions, revivals and deaths of States innumerable. During his life our sway in the East doubled its area, two peoples (the German with, the Italian without, his sympathy) were consolidated on the Continent, while another across the Atlantic developed to a magnitude that amazes and sometimes alarms the rest. Aggressions were made and repelled, patriots perorated and fought, diplomatists finessed with a zeal worthy of the world's most restless, if not its wisest, age. In the internal affairs of the leading nations the transformation scenes were often as rapid as those of a pantomime. The Art and Literature of those eighty-six years—stirred to new thought and form at their commencement by the so-called Romantic movement, more recently influenced by the Classic reaction, the Pre-Raphaelite protest, the *Æsthetic mode*—followed various even contradictory standards. But, in one line of progress, there was no shadow of turning. Over the road which Bacon laid roughly down and Newton made safe for transit, Physical Science, during the whole period, advanced without let and beyond the cavil of ignorance. If the dreams of the *New Atlantis* have not even in our days been wholly realised, Science has been brought from heaven to earth, and the elements made ministers of Prospero's wand. This apparent, and partially real, conquest of matter has doubtless done much to "relieve our estate," to make life in some directions run more smoothly, and to multiply resources to meet the demands of rapidly-increasing multitudes: but it is in danger of becoming a conquest of matter over us; for the agencies we have called into al-

most fearful activity threaten, like Frankenstein's mis-created goblin, to beat us down to the same level. Sanguine spirits who

“throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring, With, at every mile run faster, O the wondrous, wondrous age,”

are apt to forget that the electric light can do nothing to dispel the darkness of the mind; that there are strict limits to the power of prosperity to supply man's wants or satisfy his aspirations. This is a great part of Carlyle's teaching. It is impossible, were it desirable, accurately to define his religious, social, or political creed. He swallows formulæ with the voracity of Mirabeau, and like Proteus escapes analysis. No printed labels will stick to him: when we seek to corner him by argument he thunders and lightens. Emerson complains that he failed to extract from him a definite answer about Immortality. Neither by syllogism nor by crucible could Bacon himself have made the “Form” of Carlyle to confess itself. But call him what we will—essential Calvinist or recalcitrant Neologist, Mystic, Idealist, Deist or Pantheist, practical Absolutist, or “the strayed reveller” of Radicalism—he is consistent in his even bigoted antagonism to all Utilitarian solutions of the problems of the world. One of the foremost physicists of our time was among his truest and most loyal friends; they were bound together by the link of genius and kindred political views; and Carlyle was himself an expert in mathematics, the mental science that most obviously subserves physical research: but of Physics themselves (astronomy being scarcely a physical science) his ignorance was profound, and his abusive criticisms of such men as Darwin are infantile. This intellectual defect, or rather vacuum, left him free to denounce material views of life

with unconditioned vehemence. "Will the whole upholsterers," he exclaims in his half comic, sometimes nonsensical, vein, "and confectioners of modern Europe undertake to make one single shoeblack happy!" And more seriously of the railways, without whose noisy aid he had never been able to visit the battle-fields of Friedrich II.:

Our stupendous railway miracles I have stopped short in admiring. . . . The distances of London to Aberdeen, to Ostend, to Vienna, are still infinitely inadequate to me. Will you teach me the winged flight through immensity, up to the throne dark with excess of bright? You unfortunate, you grin as an ape would at such a question: you do not know that unless you can reach thither in some effectual most veritable sense, you are lost, doomed to Hela's death-realm and the abyss where mere brutes are buried. I do not want cheaper cotton, swifter railways; I want what Novalis calls "God, Freedom, and Immortality." Will swift railways and sacrifices to Hudson help me towards that?

The ECONOMIC AND MECHANICAL SPIRIT of the age, faith is mere steel or stone, was one of Carlyle's red rags. The others were INSINCERITY in Politics and in Life, DEMOCRACY without Reverence, and PHILANTHROPY without Sense. In our time these two last powers have made such strides as to threaten the Reign of Law. The Democrat without a ruler, who protests that one man is by nature as good as another, according to Carlyle is "shooting Niagara." In deference to the mandate of the philanthropist the last shred of brutality and much of decision has vanished from our code. Sentiment is in office and Mercy not only tempers, but threatens to gag Justice. When Sir Samuel Romilly began his beneficent agitation, and Carlyle was at school, talkers of treason were liable to be disembowelled before execution; now the crime of treason is practically erased, and the free use of dynamite brings so-called re-

forms "within the range of practical politics." Individualism was still a mark of the early years of the century. The spirit of "L'Etat c'est moi" survived in Mirabeau, "never name to me that *bête* of a word 'impossible;'" in the first Napoleon's threat to the Austrian ambassador, "I will break your empire like this vase;" in Nelson turning his blind eye to the signal of retreat at Copenhagen, and Wellington fencing Torres Vedras against the world: it lingered in Nicholas the Czar, and has found, perhaps, its latest political representative in Prince Bismarck.

This is the spirit to which Carlyle has always given his undivided sympathy. He has held out hands to Knox, Francia, Friedrich, to the men who have made manners, not to the manners which have made men, to the rulers of people, not to their representatives: and the not inconsiderable following he has obtained is the most conspicuous tribute to a power resolute to pull against the stream. How strong its currents may be illustrated by a few lines from our leading literary journal, the *Athenæum*, of the Saturday after his death:

"The future historian of the century will have to record the marvellous fact that while in the reign of Queen Victoria there was initiated, formulated, and methodised an entirely new cosmogony, its most powerful and highly-gifted man of letters was preaching a polity and a philosophy of history that would have better harmonised with the time of Queen Semiramis. . . . Long before he launched his sarcasms at human progress, there had been a conviction among thinkers that it was not the hero that developed the race, but a deep mysterious energy in the race that produced the hero; that the wave produced the bubble, and not the bubble the wave. But the moment a

theory of evolution saw the light it was a fact. The old cosmogony, on which were built *Sartor Resartus* and the Calvinism of Ecclefechan, was gone. Ecclefechan had declared that the earth did not move; but it moved nevertheless. The great stream of modern thought has advanced; the theory of evolution has been universally accepted; nations, it is acknowledged, produce kings, and kings are denied the faculty of producing nations."

Taliter, qualiter; but one or two remarks on the incisive summary of this adroit and able theorist are obvious. First, the implied assertion—"Ecclefechan had declared that the earth did not move"—that Carlyle was in essential sympathy with the Inquisitors who confronted Galileo with the rack, is perhaps the strangest piece of recent criticism extant: for what is his *French Revolution* but a canonade in three volumes, reverberating, as no other book has done, a hurricane of revolutionary thought and deed, a final storming of old fortresses, an assertion of the necessity of movement, progress, and upheaval. Secondly, every new discovery is apt to be discredited by new shibboleths, and one-sided exaggerations of its range. It were platitude to say that Mr. Darwin was not only an almost unrivalled student of nature, as careful and conscientious in his methods, as fearless in stating his results, but—pace Mr. Carlyle—a man of genius, who has thrown floods of light on the inter-relations of the organic world. But there are troops of serfs, "ullius addicti jurare in verba magistri," who, accepting, without attempt or capacity to verify the conclusions of the master mind, think to solve all the mysteries of the universe by ejaculating the word "Evolution." If I ask what was the secret of Dante's or of Shakespeare's divining rod, and you answer "Evolution," 'tis as if, when sick in heart and sick in head, I were

referred, as medicine for "a mind diseased," to Grimm's Law or to the Magnetic Belt.

Let us grant that Cæsar was evolved from the currents in the air about the Roman Capitol, that Marcus Aurelius was a blend of Plato and Cleanthes, Charlemagne a graft of Frankish blood on Gallic soil, William I. a rill from Rollo filtered in Neustrian fields, Hildebrand a flame from the altar of the mediæval church, Barbarossa a plant grown to masterdom in German woods, or later—not to heap up figures whose memories still possess the world—that Columbus was a Genoan breeze, Bacon a *réchauffé* of Elizabethan thought, Orange the Silent a Dutch dyke, Chatham the frontispiece of eighteenth-century England, or Corsican Buonaparte the "armed soldier of Democracy." These men, at all events, were no bubbles on the froth of the waves which they defied and dominated.

This, and more, is to be said for Carlyle's insistence that great men are creators as well as creatures of their age. Doubtless, as we advance in history, direct personal influence, happily or unhappily, declines. In an era of overwrought activity, of superficial, however free, education, when we run the risk of being associated into nothingness and criticised to death, it remains a question whether, in the interests of the highest civilisation (which means opportunity for every capable citizen to lead the highest life), the subordination of the one to the many ought to be accelerated or retarded. It is said that the triumph of Democracy is a mere "matter of time." But time is in this case of the essence of the matter, and the party of resistance will all the more earnestly maintain that the defenders should hold the forts till the invaders have become civilised. "The individual withers and the world is more and more," preludes, though over a long interval,

the cynic comment of the second "Locksley Hall" on the "increasing purpose" of the age. At an earlier date "Luria" had protested against the arrogance of mere majorities.

A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one;
And those who live as models to the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.

Carlyle set these notes to Tennyson and to Browning in his *Hero Worship*—in reality, in thought, and more in action, older than Buddha or than Achilles, but which he first, as a dogma, sprang on our recent times, clenched with the asseveration that on two men, Mirabeau and Napoleon, mainly hung the fates of the most nominally levelling of Revolutions. The stamp his teaching made is still graven on the minds of the men of light who *lead*, and cannot be wholly effaced by the tongues of the men of words who *orate*. If he leans unduly to the exaltation of personal power, Carlyle is on the side of those whose defeat can be beneficent only if it be slow. Otherwise, to account for his attitude, we must refer to his life and to its surroundings, *i.e.* to the circumstances amid which he was "evolved."

CHAPTER II.

ECCLEFECHAN AND EDINBURGH.

[1795-1826.]

IN the introduction to one of his essays, Carlyle has warned us against giving too much weight to genealogy: but all his biographies, from the sketch of the Riquetti kindred to his full length *Friedrich*, prefaced by two volumes of ancestry, recognise, if they do not overrate, inherited influences; and similarly his fragments of autobiography abound in suggestive reference. His family portraits are to be accepted with the deductions due to the family fever that was the earliest form of his hero-worship. Carlyle, says the *Athenæum* critic before quoted, divides contemporary mankind into the fools and the wise: the wise are the Carlyles, the Welshes, the Aitkens, and Edward Irving; the fools all the rest of unfortunate mortals: a Fuseli stroke of the critic¹ rivalling any of the author criticised; yet the comment has a grain of truth.

The Carlyles are said to have come from the English town somewhat differently spelt, to Annandale, with David II., and, according to a legend, which the great author did not disdain to accept, among them was a certain Lord of Thorwald, so created for defences of the Border. The churchyard of Ecclefechan is profusely strewn with the

¹ Even the most adverse critics of Carlyle are often his imitators, their hands taking a dye from what they work in.

graves of the family, all with coats of arms—two griffins with adders' stings. More definitely we find Thomas, the author's grandfather, settled in that dullest of county villages as a carpenter. In 1745 he saw the rebel Highlanders on their southward march: he was notable for his study of *Anson's Voyages* and of the *Arabian Nights*: "a fiery man, his stroke as ready as his word; of the toughness and springiness of steel; an honest but not an industrious man;" subsequently tenant of a small farm, in which capacity he does not seem to have managed his affairs with much effect; the family were subjected to severe privations, the mother having, on occasion, to heat the meal into cakes by straw taken from the sacks on which the children slept. In such an atmosphere there grew and throve the five sons known as the five fighting masons—"a curious sample of folks," said an old apprentice of one of them, "pithy, bitter speaking bodies, and awfu' fighters." The second of the group, James, born 1757, married—first, a cousin, Janet Carlyle (the issue of which marriage, John of Cockermouth, died before his grandfather); second, Margaret Aitken, by whom he had four sons—THOMAS, 1795–1881; Alexander, 1797–1876; John (Dr. Carlyle, translator of Dante), 1801–1879; and James, 1805–1890; also five daughters, one of whom, Jane, became the wife of her cousin James Aitken of Dumfries, and the mother of Mary, the niece who tended her famous uncle so faithfully during the last years of his life. Nowhere is Carlyle's loyalty to his race shown in a fairer light than in the first of the papers published under the name of *Reminiscences*. It differs from the others in being of an early date and free from all offence. From this pathetic sketch, written when on a visit to London in 1832 he had sudden news of his father's death, we may, even in our brief space,

extract a few passages which throw light on the characters, *i.e.* the points of contact and contrast of the writer and his theme :

In several respects I consider my father as one of the most interesting men I have known, . . . of perhaps the very largest natural endowment of any it has been my lot to converse with. None of you will ever forget that bold flowing style of his, flowing free from his untutored soul, full of metaphors (though he knew not what a metaphor was), with all manner of potent words. . . . Nothing did I ever hear him undertake to render visible which did not become almost ocularly so. Emphatic I have heard him beyond all men. In anger he had no need of oaths : his words were like sharp arrows that smote into the very heart. The fault was that he exaggerated (which tendency I also inherit), yet in description, and for the sake chiefly of humorous effect. He was a man of rigid, even scrupulous veracity. . . . He was never visited with doubt. The old Theorem of the Universe was sufficient for him . . . he stood a true man, while his son stands here on the verge of the new. . . . A virtue he had which I should learn to imitate : he never spoke of what was disagreeable and past. His was a healthy mind. He had the most open contempt for all "clatter." . . . He was irascible, choleric, and we all dreaded his wrath, but passion never mastered him. . . . Man's face he did not fear : God he always feared. His reverence was, I think, considerably mixed with fear—rather awe, as of utterable depths of silence through which flickered a trembling hope. . . . Let me learn of him. Let me write my books as he built his houses, and walk as blamelessly through this shadow world. . . . Though genuine and coherent, living and life-giving, he was nevertheless but half developed. We had all to complain that we durst not freely love him. His heart seemed as if walled in : he had not the free means to unbosom himself. . . . It seemed as if an atmosphere of fear repelled us from him. To me it was especially so. Till late years I was ever more or less awed and chilled by him.

James Carlyle has been compared to the father of Burns. The failings of both leant to virtue's side, in different ways. They were at one in their integrity, independence, fighting

force at stress, and their command of winged words; but the elder had a softer heart, more love of letters, a broader spirit; the younger more power to stem adverse tides, he was a better man of business, made of tougher clay, and a grimmer Calvinist. "Mr. Lawson," he writes in 1817, "is doing very well, and has given us no more paraphrases." He seems to have grown more rigid as he aged, under the narrowing influences of the Covenanting land; but he remained stable and compact as the Auldgarth Bridge, built with his own hands. James Carlyle hammered on at Ecclefechan, making in his best year £100, till, after the first decade of the century, the family migrated to Mainhill, a bleak farm two miles from Lockerby, where he so thrived by work and thrift that he left, on his death in 1832, about £1000. Strong, rough, and eminently *straight*, intolerant of contradiction and ready with words like blows, his unsympathetic side recalls rather the father of the Brontës on the wild Yorkshire moor than William Burness by the ingle of Mount Oliphant. Margaret Carlyle was in theological theory as strict as her husband, and for a time made more moan over the aberrations of her favourite son. Like most Scotch mothers of her rank, she had set her heart on seeing him in a pulpit, from which any other eminence seemed a fall; but she became, though comparatively illiterate, having only late in life learnt to write a letter, a student of his books. Over these they talked, smoking together, in old country fashion, by the hearth; and she was to the last proud of the genius which grew in large measure under the unfailing sunshine of her anxious love.

Book II. of *Sartor* is an acknowledged fragment of autobiography, mainly a record of the author's inner life, but with numerous references to his environment. There is not much to identify the foster parents of Teufelsdröckh,

and the dramatic drollery of the child's advent takes the place of ancestry: Entefuhl is obviously Ecclefechan, where the ducks are paddling in the ditch that has to pass muster for a stream, to-day as a century gone: the severe frugality which (as in the case of Wordsworth and Carlyle himself) survived the need for it is clearly recalled; also the discipline of the Roman-like domestic law, "In an orderly house, where the litter of children's sports is hateful, your training is rather to bear than to do. I was forbid much, wishes in any measure bold I had to renounce; everywhere a strait bond of obedience inflexibly held me down. It was not a joyful life, yet . . . a wholesome one." The following oft-quoted passage is characteristic of his early love of nature and the humorous touches by which he was wont to relieve his fits of sentiment:

On fine evenings I was wont to carry forth my supper (bread crumb boiled in milk) and eat it out of doors. On the coping of the wall, which I could reach by climbing, my porringer was placed: there many a sunset have I, looking at the distant mountains, consumed, not without relish, my evening meal. Those hues of gold and azure, that hush of worldly expectation as day died, were still a Hebrew speech for me: nevertheless I was looking at the fair illuminated letters, and had an eye for the gilding.

In all that relates to the writer's own education, the *Dichtung* of *Sartor* and the *Wahrheit* of the *Reminiscences* are in accord. By Carlyle's own account, an "insignificant portion" of it "depended on schools." Like Burns, he was for some years trained in his own parish, where home influences counted for more than the teaching of not very competent masters. He soon read eagerly and variously. At the age of seven he was, by an Inspector of the old order, reported to be "complete in English."

In his tenth year (1805) he was sent to the Grammar School of Annan, the "Hinterschlag Gymnasium," where his "evil days began." Every oversensitive child finds the life of a public school one long misery. Ordinary boys—those of the Scotch borderland being of the most savage type—are more brutal than ordinary men; they hate singularity as the world at first hates originality, and have none of the restraints which the later semi-civilisation of life imposes. "They obey the impulse of rude Nature which bids the deerherd fall upon any stricken hart, the duck flock put to death any broken-winged brother or sister, and on all hands the strong tyrannise over the weak." Young Carlyle was mocked for his moody ways, laughed at for his love of solitude, and called "Tom the Tearful" because of his habit of crying. To add much to his discomfort, he had made a rash promise to his pious mother, who seems, in contrast to her husband's race, to have adopted non-resistance principles—a promise to abstain from fighting, provocative of many cuffs till it was well broken by a hinterschlag, applied to some blustering bully. Nor had he refuge in the sympathy of his teacher's "hide-bound pedants, who knew Syntax enough, and of the human soul thus much: that it had a faculty called Memory, which could be acted on through the muscular integument by appliance of birch rods." At Annan, however, he acquired a fair knowledge of Latin and French, the rudiments of algebra, the Greek alphabet, began to study history, and had his first glimpse of Edward Irving, the bright prize-taker from Edinburgh, later his Mentor and then life-long friend. On Thomas's return home it was decided to send him to the University, despite the cynical warning of one of the village cronies, "Educate a boy, and he grows up to despise his ignorant

parents." "Thou hast not done so," said old James in after years; "God be thanked for it," and the son plays due tribute to the tolerant patience and substantial generosity of the father: "With a noble faith he launched me forth into a world which he himself had never been permitted to visit." Carlyle walked through Moffat all the way to Edinburgh with a senior student, Tom Smail (who owes to this fact the preservation of his name), with eyes open to every shade on the moors, as is attested in two passages of the *Reminiscences*. The boys, as is the fashion still, clubbed together in cheap lodgings, and Carlyle attended the curriculum from 1809 to 1814. Comparatively little is known of his college life, which seems to have been for the majority of Scotch students much as it is now, a compulsorily frugal life, with too little variety, relaxation, or society outside Class Rooms, and within them a constant tug at Science, mental or physical, at the gateway to dissecting souls or bodies. We infer, from hints in later conversations and memorials, that Carlyle lived much with his own fancies, and owed little to any system. He is clearly thinking of his own youth in his account of Dr. Francia: "José must have been a loose-made tawny creature, much given to taciturn reflection, probably to crying humours, with fits of vehement ill nature—subject to the terriblest fits of hypochondria." His explosion in *Sartor*, "It is my painful duty to say that out of England and Spain, ours was the worst of all hitherto discovered Universities," is the first of a long series of libels on things and persons he did not like. The Scotch capital was still a literary centre of some original brilliancy, in the light of the circle of Scott, which followed that of Burns, in the early fame of Cockburn and Clark (Lord Eldin), of the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh Reviews*, and of

the elder Alison. The Chairs of the University were conspicuously well filled by men of the sedate sort of ability required from Professors, some of them—conspicuously Brown, the more original if less “sound” successor of Dugald Stewart, Playfair, and Leslie—rising to a higher rank. But great Educational institutions must adapt themselves to the training of average minds by requirements and retractions against which genius always rebels. Biography more than History repeats itself, and the murmurs of Carlyle are, like those of Milton, Gibbon, Locke, and Wordsworth, the protests or growls of irrepressible individuality kicking against the pricks. He was never in any sense a classic; read Greek with difficulty—Æschylus and Sophocles mainly in translations—and while appreciating Tacitus disparaged Horace. For Scotch Metaphysics, or any logical system, he never cared, and in his days there was written over the Academic entrances “No Mysticism.” He distinguished himself in Mathematics, and soon found, by his own vaunt,¹ the *Principia* of Newton prostrate at his feet: he was a favourite pupil of Leslie, who escaped the frequent penalty of befriending him, but he took no prizes: the noise in the class room hindered his answers, and he said later to Mr. Froude that thoughts only came to him properly when alone. The social leader of a select set of young men in his own rank, by choice and necessity *integer vitæ* he divided his time between the seclusion of study and writing letters, in which kind of literature he was perhaps the most prolific writer of his time. In 1814 Carlyle completed his course without taking a degree, did some tutorial work, and, in the

¹ He went so far as to say in 1847 that “the man who had mastered the first forty-seven propositions of Euclid stood nearer to God than he had done before.”

same year, accepted the post of Mathematical Usher at Annan as successor to Irving, who had been translated to Haddington. Still in formal pursuit of the ministry, though beginning to fight shy of its fences, he went up twice a year to deliver addresses at the Divinity Hall, one of which, "on the uses of affliction," was afterwards by himself condemned as flowery; another was a Latin thesis on the theme, "num detur religio naturalis." The posthumous publication of some of his writings, *e.g.* of the fragment of the novel *Wotton Reinfred*, reconciles us to the loss of those which have not been recovered.

In the vacations, spent at Mainhill, he began to study German, and corresponded with his College friends. Many of Carlyle's early letters, reproduced in the volumes edited by Mr. Charles E. Norton, are written in what Sydney Smith asserts to be the only unpermissible style, "the tiresome;" and the thought, far from being precocious, is distinctly commonplace, *e.g.* the letter to Robert Mitchell on the fall of Napoleon; or the following to his parents: "There are few things in this world more valuable than knowledge, and youth is the season for acquiring it;" or to James Johnstone the trite quotation, "Truly pale death overturns with impartial foot the hut of the poor man and the palace of the king." Several are marred by the egotism which in most Scotch peasants of aspiring talent takes the form of perpetual comparison of themselves with others; refrains of the ambition against which the writer elsewhere inveighs as the "kettle tied to the dog's tail." In a note to Thomas Murray he writes:

Ever since I have been able to form a wish, the wish of being known has been the foremost. O Fortune! bestow coronets and crowns and principalities and purses and pudding and power, upon the great and noble and fat ones of the earth. Grant me that, with

a heart unyielding to thy favours and unbending to thy frowns, I may attain to literary fame.

That his critical and literary instincts were yet undeveloped there is ample proof. Take his comment, at the age of nineteen, on the verses of Leyden :

Shout, Britons, for the battle of Assaye,
For that was a day
When we stood in our array
Like the lions might at bay.

"Can anything be grander?" To Johnstone (who with Mitchell consumes a whole volume) he writes: "Read Shakespeare. If you have not, then I desire you read it (*sic*) and tell me what you think of *him*," etc. Elsewhere the dogmatic summary of Hume's "Essays" illustrates the lingering eighteenth-century Latinism that had been previously travestied in the more stilted passages of the letters of Burns. "Many of his opinions are not to be adopted. How odd does it look to refer all the modifications of national character to the influence of moral causes. Might it not be asserted with some plausibility that even those which he denominates moral causes originate from physical circumstances." The whole first volume of this somewhat over-expanded collection overflows with ebullitions of bile, in comparison with which the misanthropy of Byron's early romances seems philanthropy, *e.g.* :

How weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable seems to me all the uses of this world. For what are its inhabitants? Its great men and its little, its fat ones and its lean . . . pitiful automats, despicable Yahoos, yea, they are altogether an insufferable thing. "O! for a lodge in some vast wilderness, some boundless continuity of shade, where the scowl of the purse-proud nabob, the sneer and strut of the coxcomb, the bray of the ninny and the clodpole might never reach me more."

On the other hand, there are frequent evidences of the imperial intrepidity, the matchless industry, and the splendid independence of the writer. In his twenty-first year Carlyle again succeeded his Annan predecessor (who seems to have given dissatisfaction by some vagaries of severity) as mathematical teacher in the main school of Kirkcaldy. The *Reminiscences* of Irving's generous reception of his protégé present one of the pleasantest pictures in the records of their friendship. The same chapter is illustrated by a series of sketches of the scenery of the east coast rarely rivalled in descriptive literature. It is elsewhere enlivened, if also defaced, by the earliest examples of the cynical criticisms of character that make most readers rejoice in having escaped the author's observation.

During the two years of his residence in Fifeshire, Carlyle encountered his first romance, in making acquaintance with a well-born young lady, "by far the brightest and cleverest" of Irving's pupils—Margaret Gordon—"an acquaintance which might easily have been more" had not relatives and circumstances intervened. Doubtless Mr. Froude is right in asserting this lady to have been the original of *Sartor's* "Blumine," and in leaving him to marry "Herr Towgood," ultimately Governor of Nova Scotia, she bequeathed, though in formal antitheses, advice that reflects well on her discrimination of character. "Cultivate the milder dispositions of the heart, subdue the mere extravagant visions of the brain. Genius will render you great. May virtue render you beloved. Remove the awful distance between you and other men by kind and gentle manners. Deal gently with their inferiority, and be convinced that they will respect you as much and like you more." To this advice, which he never even tried to take, she adds, happily perhaps for herself, "I give you not my

address, because I dare not promise to see you." In 1818 Carlyle, always intolerant of work imposed, came to the conclusion that "it were better to perish than to continue schoolmastering," and left Kirkcaldy, with £90 saved, for Edinburgh, where he lived over three years, taking private pupils, and trying to enter on his real mission through the gates of literature — gates constantly barred, for even in those older days of laxer competition, obstinacy, and outréness, unredeemed by any social advantages, were guarantees of frequent failure. Men with the literary form of genius highly developed have rarely much endurance of defeat. Carlyle, even in his best moods, resented real or fancied injuries, and at this stage of his career complained that he got nothing but vinegar from his fellows, comparing himself to a worm that, trodden on, would turn into a torpedo. He had begun to be tormented by the dyspepsia, which "gnawed like a rat" at its life-long tenement, his stomach, and by sleeplessness, due in part to internal causes, but also to the "Bedlam" noises of men, machines, and animals, which pestered him in town and country from first to last. He kept hesitating about his career, tried law, mathematical teaching, contributions to magazines and dictionaries, everything but journalism, to which he had a rooted repugnance, and the Church, which he had definitely abandoned. How far the change in his views may have been due to his reading of Gibbon,¹ Rousseau, Voltaire, etc., how far to self-reflection is uncertain, but he already found himself unable, in a plain sense, to subscribe to the Westminster Confession or any so-called orthodox

¹ He refers to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* as "of all books the most impressive on me in my then stage of investigation and state of mind. His winged sarcasms, so quiet and yet so conclusively transpiercing, were often admirably potent and illustrative to me."

articles, and equally unable by any philosophical reconciliation of contraries to write black with white on a ground of neutral gray. Mentally and physically adrift he was midway in the valley of the shadow, which he represents as "The Everlasting No," and beset by "temptations in the wilderness." At this crisis he writes, "the biographies of men of letters are the wretchedest chapters in our history, except perhaps the Newgate Calendar," a remark that recalls the similar cry of Burns, "There are not among the martyrologies so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets." Carlyle, reverting to this crisis, refers with constant bitterness to the absence of a popularity which he yet professes to scorn.

I was entirely unknown in Edinburgh circles; solitary eating my own heart, misgivings as to whether there shall be presently anything else to eat, fast losing health, a prey to numerous struggles and miseries . . . three weeks without any kind of sleep, from impossibility to be free of noise, . . . wanderings through mazes of doubt, perpetual questions unanswered, etc.

What is this but Byron's cry, "I am not happy?" which his afterwards stern critic compares to the screaming of a meat-jack.

Carlyle carried with him from town to country the same dismal mood. "Mainhill," says his biographer, "was never a less happy home to him than it was this summer (1819). He could not conceal the condition of his mind; and to his family, to whom the truth of their creed was no more a matter of doubt than the presence of the sun in the sky, he must have seemed as if possessed."

Returning to Edinburgh in the early winter, he for a time wrote hopefully about his studies. "The law I find to be a most complicated subject, yet I like it pretty well.

Its great charm in my eyes is that no mean compliances are requisite for prospering in it." But this strain soon gave way to a fresh fit of perversity, and we have a record of his throwing up the cards in one of his most ill-natured notes.

I did read some law books, attend Hume's lectures on Scotch law, and converse with and question various dull people of the practical sort. But it and they and the admired lecturing Hume himself appeared to me mere denizens of the kingdom of dulness, pointing towards nothing but money as wages for all that bogpost of disgust.

The same year (that of Peterloo) was that of the Radical rising in Glasgow against the poverty which was the natural aftermath of the great war, oppressions, half real, half imaginary, of the military force, and the yeomanry in particular. Carlyle's contribution to the reminiscences of the time is doubly interesting because written (in the article on Irving, 1836) from memory, when he had long ceased to be a Radical. A few sentences suffice to illustrate this phase or stage of his political progress :

A time of great rages and absurd terrors and expectations, a very fierce Radical and anti-Radical time. Edinburgh, endlessly agitated by it all around me . . . gentry people full of zeal and foolish terror and fury, and looking *disgustingly busy and important*. . . One bleared Sunday morning I had gone out for my walk. At the riding house in Nicholson Street was a kind of straggly group, with red-coats interspersed. They took their way, not very dangerous-looking men of war ; but there rose from the little crowd the strangest shout I have heard human throats utter, not very loud, but it said as plain as words, and with infinitely more emphasis of sincerity, "May the devil go with you, ye peculiarly contemptible, and dead to the distresses of your fellow-creatures." Another morning . . . I met an advocate slightly of my acquaintance hurrying along, musket in hand, towards the Links, there to be drilled as item of the "gentlemen "

volunteers now a-foot. "You should have the like of this," said he, cheerily patting his musket. "Hm, yes; but I haven't yet quite settled on which side"—which probably he hoped was quiz, though it really expressed my feeling . . . mutiny and revolt being a light matter to the young.

This period is illustrated by numerous letters from Irving, who had migrated to Glasgow as an assistant to Dr. Chalmers, abounding in sound counsels to persevere in some profession and make the best of practical opportunities. None of Carlyle's answers have been preserved, but the sole trace of his having been influenced by his friend's advice is his contribution (1820-1823) of sixteen¹

¹ The subjects of these were—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Montaigne, Montesquieu, Montfaucon, Dr. Moore, Sir John Moore, Necker, Nelson, Netherlands, Newfoundland, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Mungo Park, Lord Chatham, William Pitt. These articles, on the whole, judiciously omitted from the author's collected works, are characterised by marks of great industry, commonplace and general fairness, with a style singularly formal, like that of the less impressive pages of Johnson. The following, among numerous passages, are curious as illustrating the comparative orthodoxy of the writer's early judgments: "The brilliant hints which 'Montesquieu' scatters round him with a liberal hand have excited or assisted the speculations of others in almost every department of political economy, and he is deservedly mentioned as a principal founder of that important service." "Mirabeau confronted him ('Necker') like his evil genius; and being totally without scruple in the employment of any expedient, was but too successful in overthrowing all reasonable proposals, and conducting the people to that state of anarchy out of which his own ambition was to be rewarded," etc. Similarly the verdicts on Pitt, Chatham, Nelson, Park, Lady Montagu, etc., are those of an ordinary intelligent Englishman of conscientious research, fed on the "Lives of the Poets" and Trafalgar memories. The morality, as in the Essay on Montaigne, is unexceptionable; the following would commend itself to any boarding-

articles to the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia* under the editorship of Sir David Brewster. The scant remuneration obtained from these was well timed, but they contain no original matter, and did nothing for his fame. Meanwhile it appears from one of Irving's letters that Carlyle's thoughts had been, as later in his early London life, turning towards emigration. "He says," writes his friend, "I have the ends of my thoughts to bring together . . . my views of life to reform, my health to recover, and then once more I shall venture my bark on the waters of this wide realm, and if she cannot weather it I shall steer west and try the waters of another world."

The resolves, sometimes the efforts of celebrated Englishmen, "nos manet oceanus," as Cromwell, Burns, Coleridge, and Southey (allured, some critic suggests, by the poetical sound of Susquehanna), Arthur Clough, Richard Hengist Horne, and Browning's "Waring," to elude "the fever and the fret" of an old civilisation, and take refuge in the fancied freedom of wild lands, when more than dreams have been failures. Puritan patriots, it is true, made New England and the scions of the Cavaliers Virginia; but no poet or imaginative writer has ever been successfully transplanted, with the dubious exception of Heinrich Heine. It is certain that, despite his first warm recognition coming from across the Atlantic, the author of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* would have found the "States"

school: "Melancholy experience has never ceased to show that great warlike talents, like great talents of any kind, may be united with a coarse and ignoble heart."

¹ Cf. the American Bryant himself, in his longing to leave his New York Press and "plant him where the red deer feed, in the green forest," to lead the life of Robin Hood and Shakespeare's banished Duke.

more fruitful in food for cursing than either Edinburgh or London.

The spring of 1820 was marked by a memorable visit to Irving, on Carlyle's way to spend, as was his wont, the summer months at home. His few days in Glasgow are recorded in a graphic sketch of the bald-headed merchants at the Tontine, and an account of his introduction to Dr. Chalmers, to whom he refers always with admiration and a respect but slightly modified. The critic's praise of British contemporaries, other than relatives, is so rare that the following sentences are worth transcribing:

He (Chalmers) was a man of much natural dignity, ingenuity, honesty, and kind affection, as well as sound intellect and imagination. . . . He had a burst of genuine fun too. . . . His laugh was ever a hearty, low guffaw, and his tones in preaching would reach to the piercingly pathetic. No preacher ever went so into one's heart. He was a man essentially of little culture, of narrow sphere all his life. Such an intellect, professing to be educated, and yet . . . ignorant in all that lies beyond the horizon in place or time I have almost nowhere met with—a man capable of so much soaking indolence, lazy brooding . . . as a first stage of his life well indicated, . . . yet capable of impetuous activity and braying audacity, as his later years showed. I suppose there will never again be such a preacher in any Christian church. "The truth of Christianity," he said, "was all written in us already in sympathetic ink. Bible awakens it and you can read."

A sympathetic image but of no great weight as an argument addressed to doubting Thomas. Chalmers, whose originality lay rather in his quick insight and fire than in his, mainly commonplace, thought, had the credit of recognising the religious side of his (Carlyle's) genius, when to the mass of his countrymen he was a rock of offence. One of the great preacher's criticisms of the great writer

is notably just: "He is a lover of earnestness more than a lover of truth."

There follows in some of the first pages of the *Reminiscences* an account of a long walk with Irving, who had arranged to accompany Carlyle for the first stage, *i.e.* fifteen miles of the road of his, for the most part, pedestrian march from Glasgow to Ecclefechan, a record among many of similar excursions over dales and hills, and "by the beached margent," revived for us in sun and shade by a pen almost as magical as Turner's brush. We must refer to the pages of Mr. Froude for the picture of Drumclog moss—"a good place for Cameronian preaching, and dangerously difficult for Claverse (*sic*) and horse soldiery if the suffering remnant had a few old muskets among them"—for the graphic glimpse of Ailsa Craig, and the talk by the dry stone fence, in the twilight. "It was just here, as the sun was sinking, Irving drew from me by degrees, in the softest manner, that I did not think as he of the Christian religion, and that it was vain for me to expect I ever could or should. This, if this was so, he had pre-engaged to take well of me, like an elder brother, if I would be frank with him. And right loyally he did so." They parted here: Carlyle trudged on to the then "utterly quiet little inn" at Muirkirk, left next morning at 4 A.M., and reached Dumfries, a distance of fifty-four miles, at 8 P.M., "the longest walk I ever made." He spent the summer at Mainhill, studying modern languages, "living riotously with Schiller and Goethe," at work on the *Encyclopædia* articles, and visiting his friend at Annan, when there came an offer of the charge of a son of a Yorkshire farmer, which Irving urged him to accept, advancing the old plea, "You live too much in an ideal world," and wisely adding, "try your hand with the respectable illit-

erate men of middle life. You may be taught to forget . . . the splendours and envies . . . of men of literature."

This exhortation led to a result recorded with much humour, egotism, and arrogance in a letter to his intimate friend Dr. John Fergusson, of Kelso Grammar School, which, despite the mark "private and confidential," was yet published, several years after the death of the recipient and shortly after that of the writer, in a gossiping memoir. We are, therefore, at liberty to select from the letter the following paragraphs:

I delayed sending an answer till I might have it in my power to communicate what seemed then likely to produce a considerable change in my stile (*sic*) of life, a proposal to become a "travelling tutor," as they call it, to a young person in the North Riding, for whom that exercise was recommended on account of bodily and mental weakness. They offered me £150 per annum, and withal invited me to come and examine things on the spot before engaging. I went accordingly, and happy was it I went; from description I was ready to accept the place; from inspection all Earndale would not have hired me to accept it. This boy was a dotard, a semi-vegetable, the elder brother, head of the family, a two-legged animal without feathers, intellect, or virtue, and all the connections seemed to have the power of eating pudding but no higher power. So I left the barbarous people. . . . York is but a heap of bricks. Jonathan Dryasdust (see *Ivanhoe*) is justly named. York is the Bæotia of Britain. . . . Upon the whole, however, I derived great amusement from my journey, . . . I conversed with all kinds of men, from graziers up to knights of the shire, argued with them all, and broke specimens from their souls (if any,) which I retain within the museum of my cranium. I have no prospects that are worth the name. I am like a being thrown from another planet on this dark terrestrial ball, an alien, a pilgrim . . . and life is to me like a pathless, a waste, and a howling wilderness. Do not leave your situation if you can possibly avoid it. Experience shows it to be a fearful thing to be swept in by the roaring surge of life, and then to float alone undirected on its restless, monstrous bosom. Keep ashore while yet

you may, or if you must to sea, sail under convoy; trust not the waves without a guide. You and I are but pinnaces or cork boats, yet hold fast by the Manilla ship, *and do not let go the painter.*

Towards the close of this year Irving, alarmed by his friend's despondency, sent him a most generous and delicately-worded invitation to spend some months under his roof; but Carlyle declined, and in a letter of March, 1821, he writes to his brother John: "Edinburgh, with all its drawbacks, is the only scene for me," on which follows one of his finest descriptions, that of the view from Arthur's Seat.

According to the most probable chronology, for many of Carlyle's dates are hard to fix, the next important event of his life, his being introduced, on occasion of a visit to Haddington, to Miss Jane Welsh by her old tutor, Edward Irving—an event which marks the beginning of a new era in his career—took place towards the close of May or in the first week of June. To June is assigned the incident, described in *Sartor* as the transition from the Everlasting No to the Everlasting Yea, a sort of revelation that came upon him as he was in Leith Walk—Rue St. Thomas de l'Enfer in the Romance—on the way to cool his distempers by a plunge in the sea. The passage proclaiming this has been everywhere quoted; and it is only essential to note that it resembled the "illuminations" of St. Paul and of Constantine merely by its being a sudden spiritual impulse. It was in no sense a conversion to any belief in person or creed, it was but the assertion of a strong manhood against an almost suicidal mood of despair; a condition set forth with a superabundant paraphernalia of eloquence easily condensed. Doubt in the mind of Teufelsdröckh had darkened into disbelief in divine or human justice, freedom, or himself. If there be a God, He sits

on the hills "since the first Sabbath," careless of mankind. Duty seems to be but a "phantasm made up of desire and fear;" virtue "some bubble of the blood," absence of vitality perhaps.

What in these days are terrors of conscience to diseases of the liver? Not on morality but on cookery let us build our stronghold. . . . Thus has the bewildered wanderer to stand, shouting question after question into the Sibyl cave, and receiving for answer an echo.

From this scepticism, deeper than that of *Queen Mab*, fiercer than that of *Candide*, Carlyle was dramatically rescued by the sense that he was a servant of God, even when doubting His existence.

After all the nameless woe that inquiry had wrought me, I nevertheless still loved truth, and would bait no jot of my allegiance. . . . Truth I cried, though the heavens crush me for following her; no falsehood! though a whole celestial lubberland were the price of apostacy.

With a grasp on this rock, Carlyle springs from the slough of despond and asserts himself:

Ich bin ein Mensch geboren
Und das muss ein Kämpfer seyn.

He finds in persistent action, energy, and courage a present strength, and a lamp of at least such partial victory as he lived to achieve.

He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the spectres of the mind—

but he never "laid them," or came near the serenity of his master, Goethe; and his teaching, public and private, remained half a wail. The Leith Walk revolt was rather the attitude of a man turning at bay than of one making a leap.

Death? Well, Death . . . let it come then, and I will meet it and defy it. And as so I thought there rushed a stream of fire over my soul, and I shook base fear away. Ever from that time the temper of my misery was changed; not . . . whining sorrow . . . but grim defiance.

Yet the misery remained, for two years later we find him writing:

I could read the curse of Ernulphus, or something twenty times as fierce, upon myself and all things earthly. . . . The year is closing. This time eight and twenty years I was a child of three weeks ago. . . .

Oh! little did my mother think,
That day she cradled me,
The lands that I should travel in,
The death I was to dee.

My curse seems deeper and blacker than that of any man: to be immured in a rotten carcase, every avenue of which is changed into an inlet of pain. How have I deserved this? . . . I know not. Then why don't you kill yourself, sir? Is there not arsenic, is there not ratsbane of various kinds, and hemp, and steel? Most true, Sathanas . . . but it will be time enough to use them when I have *lost* the game I am but *losing*, . . . and while my friends, my mother, father, brothers, sisters live, the duty of not breaking their hearts would still remain. . . . I want health, health, health! On this subject I am becoming quite furious: my torments are greater than I am able to bear.

Nowhere in Carlyle's writing, save on the surface, is there any excess of Optimism; but after the Leith Walk inspiration he had resolved on "no surrender;" and that, henceforth, he had better heart in his work we have proof in its more regular, if not more rapid, progress. His last hack service was the series of articles for Brewster, unless we add a translation, under the same auspices, of Legendre's Geometry, begun, according to some reports, in the Kirk-

caldy period, finished in 1822, and published in 1824. For this task, prefixed by an original *Essay on Proportion*, much commended by De Morgan, he obtained the respectable sum of £50. Two subsequent candidatures for Chairs of Astronomy showed that Carlyle had not lost his taste for Mathematics; but this work was his practical farewell to that science. His first sustained efforts as an author were those of an interpreter. His complete mastery of German has been said to have endowed him with "his sword of sharpness and shoes of swiftness;" it may be added, in some instances also, with the "fog-cap." But in his earliest substantial volume, the *Life of Schiller*, there is nothing either obscure in style or mystic in thought. This work began to appear in the *London Magazine* in 1823, was finished in 1824, and in 1825 published in a separate form. Approved during its progress by an encouraging article in the *Times*, it was, in 1830, translated into German on the instigation of Goethe, who introduced the work by an important commendatory preface, and so first brought the author's name conspicuously before a continental public. Carlyle himself, partly, perhaps, from the spirit of contradiction, was inclined to speak slightingly of this high-toned and sympathetic biography: "It is," said he, "in the wrong vein, laborious, partly affected, meagre, bombastic." But these are sentences of a morbid time, when, for want of other victims, he turned and rent himself. *Pari passu*, he was toiling at his translation of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. This was published in Edinburgh in 1824. Heartily commended in *Blackwood*, it was generally recognised as one of the best English renderings of any foreign author; and Jeffrey, in his absurd review of Goethe's great prose drama, speaks in high terms of the skill displayed by the translator. The virulent at-

tack of De Quincey—a writer as unreliable as brilliant—in the *London Magazine* does not seem to have carried much weight even then, and has none now. The *Wanderjahre*, constituting the third volume of the English edition, first appeared as the last of four on German Romance—a series of admirably selected and executed translations from Müssæus, Fouqué, Tieck, Hoffmann, Richter, and Goethe, prefaced by short biographical and critical notices of each—published in Edinburgh in 1827. This date is also that of the first of the more elaborate and extensive criticisms which, appearing in the Edinburgh and Foreign reviews, established Carlyle as the English pioneer of German literature. The result of these works would have been enough to drive the wolf from the door and to render their author independent of the oatmeal from home; but another source of revenue enabled him not only to keep himself, but to settle his brother Alick in a farm, and to support John through his University course as a medical student. This and similar services to the family circle were rendered with gracious disclaimers of obligation. “What any brethren of our father’s house possess, I look on as a common stock from which all are entitled to draw.”

For this good fortune he was again indebted to his friend of friends. Irving had begun to feel his position at Glasgow unsatisfactory, and at the close of 1821 he was induced to accept an appointment to the Caledonian Chapel at Hatton Garden. On migrating to London, to make a greater, if not a safer, name in the central city, and finally, be lost in its vortex, he had invited Carlyle to follow him, saying, “Scotland breeds men, but England rears them.” Shortly after, introduced by Mrs. Strachey, one of his worshipping audience, to her sister, Mrs. Buller, he found the latter in trouble about the education of her sons.

Charles, the elder, was a youth of bright but restive intelligence, and it was desired to find some transitional training for him on his way from Harrow to Cambridge. Irving urged his being placed, in the interim, under Carlyle's charge. The proposal, with an offer of £200 a year, was accepted, and the brothers were soon duly installed in George Square, while their tutor remained in Moray Place, Edinburgh. The early stages of this relationship were eminently satisfactory; Carlyle wrote that the teaching of the Bullers was a pleasure rather than a task; they seemed to him "quite another set of boys than I have been used to, and treat me in another sort of manner than tutors are used. The eldest is one of the cleverest boys I have ever seen." There was never any jar between the teacher and the taught. Carlyle speaks with unfailing regard of the favourite pupil, whose brilliant University and Parliamentary career bore testimony to the good practical guidance he had received. His premature death at the entrance on a sphere¹ of wider influence made a serious blank in his old master's life.

But as regards the relation of the employer and employed, we are wearied by the constantly recurring record of kindness lavishly bestowed, ungraciously received, and soon ungratefully forgotten. The elder Bullers—the mother a former beauty and woman of some brilliancy, the father a solid and courteous gentleman retired from the Anglo-Indian service—came to Edinburgh in the spring of the tutorship, and recognising Carlyle's abilities, welcomed him to the family circle, and treated him, by his own confession, with a "degree of respect" he "did not de-

¹ Charles Buller became Carlyle's pupil at the age of fifteen. He died as Commissioner of the Poor in 1848 (*æt.* forty-two).

serve;" adapting their arrangements, as far as possible, to his hours and habits; consulting his convenience and humouring his whims. Early in 1823 they went to live together at Kinnaird House, near Dunkeld, when he continued to write letters to his kin still praising his patrons; but the first note of discord is soon struck in satirical references to their aristocratic friends and querulous complaints of the servants. During the winter, for greater quiet, a room was assigned to him in another house near Kinnaird; a consideration which met with the award: "My bower is the most polite of bowers, refusing admittance to no wind that blows." And about this same time he wrote, growling at his fare: "It is clear to me that I shall never recover my health under the economy of Mrs. Buller."

In 1824 the family returned to London, and Carlyle followed in June by a sailing yacht from Leith. On arrival he sent to Miss Welsh a letter, sneering at his fellow passengers, but ending with a striking picture of his first impressions of the capital:

We were winding slowly through the forests of masts in the Thames up to our station at Tower Wharf. The giant bustle, the coal heavers, the bargemen, the black buildings, the ten thousand times ten thousand sounds and movements of that monstrous harbour formed the grandest object I had ever witnessed. One man seems a drop in the ocean; you feel annihilated in the immensity of that heart of all the world.

On reaching London he first stayed for two or three weeks under Irving's roof and was introduced to his friends. Of Mrs. Strachey and her young cousin Kitty, who seems to have run the risk of admiring him to excess, he always spoke well: but the Basil Montagues, to whose hospitality and friendship he was made welcome, he has maligned in such a manner as to justify the retaliatory

pamphlet of the sharp-tongued eldest daughter of the house, then about to become Mrs. Anne Procter. By letter and "reminiscence" he is equally reckless in invective against almost all the eminent men of letters with whom he then came in contact, and also, in most cases, in ridicule of their wives. His accounts of Hazlitt, Campbell, and Coleridge have just enough truth to exasperate the libels, in some cases perhaps whetted by the consciousness of their being addressed to a sympathetic listener: but it is his frequent travesty of well-wishers and creditors for kindness that has left the deepest stain on his memory. Settled with his pupil Charles in Kew Green lodgings he writes: "The Bullers are essentially a cold race of people. They live in the midst of fashion and external show. They love no living creature." And a fortnight later, from Irving's house at Pentonville, he sends to his mother an account of his self-dismissal. Mrs. Buller had offered him two alternatives—to go with the family to France or to remain in the country preparing the eldest boy for Cambridge. He declined both, and they parted, shaking hands with dry eyes. "I feel glad," he adds in a sentence that recalls the worst egotism of Coleridge,¹ "that I have done with them. . . . I was selling the very quintessence of my spirit for £200 a year."

There followed eight weeks of residence in or about Birmingham, with a friend called Badams, who undertook to cure dyspepsia by a new method and failed without being reviled. Together, and in company with others, as the astronomer Airy, they saw the black country and the toiling squads, in whom Carlyle, through all his shifts from radical democracy to Platonic autocracy, continued to take

¹ *Vide* Carlyle's *Life of Sterling*, chap. viii., p. 79.

a deep interest; on other days they had pleasant excursions to the green fields and old towers of Warwickshire. On occasion of this visit he came in contact with De Quincy's review of *Meister*, and in recounting the event credits himself with the philosophic thought, "This man is perhaps right on some points; if so let him be admonitory." But the description that follows of "the child that has been in hell," however just, is less magnanimous. Then came a trip, in company with Mr. Strachey and Kitty and maid, by Dover and Calais along Sterne's route to Paris, "The Vanity Fair of the Universe," where Louis XVIII. was then lying dead in state. Carlyle's comments are mainly acid remarks on the Palais Royal, with the refrain, "God bless the narrow seas." But he saw Legendre and Laplace, heard Cuvier lecture and Talma act, and what was of more moment, had his first sight of the Continent and the city of one phase of whose history he was to be the most brilliant recorder. Back in London for the winter, where his time was divided between Irving's house and his own neighbouring room in Southampton Street; he was cheered by Goethe's own acknowledgment of the translation of *Meister*, and wrote more epistolary satires, welcome at Haddington.

In March, 1825, Carlyle again set his face northward, and travelling by coach through Birmingham, Manchester, Bolton, and Carlisle, established himself, in May, at Hoddam Hill; a farm near the Solway, three miles from Mainhill, which his father had leased for him. His brother Alexander farmed, while Thomas toiled on at German translations and rode about on horseback. For a space, one of the few contented periods of his life, there is a truce to complaining. Here, free from the noises, which are the pests of literary life, he was building up his character and

forming the opinions which, with few material changes, he long continued to hold. Thus he writes from over a distance of forty years:

With all its manifold petty troubles, this year at Hoddam Hill has a rustic beauty and dignity to me, and lies now like a not ignoble russet-coated idyll in my memory; one of the quietest on the whole, and perhaps the most triumphantly important of my life. . . . I found that I had conquered all my scepticisms, agonising doubtings, fearful wrestlings with the foul and vile and soul-murdering mud-gods of my epoch, and was emerging free in spirit into the eternal blue of ether. I had in effect gained an immense victory. . . . Once more, thank Heaven for its highest gift, I then felt and still feel endlessly indebted to Goethe in the business. He, in his fashion, I perceived, had travelled the steep road before me, the first of the moderns. Bodily health itself seemed improving. . . . Nowhere can I recollect of myself such pious musings, communings silent and spontaneous with Fact and Nature as in these poor Annandale localities. The sound of the Kirk bell once or twice on Sunday mornings from Hoddam Kirk, about a mile off on the plain below me, was strangely touching, like the departing voice of eighteen hundred years.

Elsewhere, during one of the rare gleams of sunshine in a life of lurid storms, we have the expression of his passionate independence, his tyrannous love of liberty:

It is inexpressible what an increase of happiness and of consciousness—of inward dignity—I have gained since I came within the walls of this poor cottage—my own four walls. They simply admit that I am *Herr im Hause*, and act on this conviction. There is no grumbling about my habitudes and whims. If I choose to dine on fire and brimstone, they will cook it for me to their best skill, thinking only that I am an unintelligible mortal, *fâcheux* to deal with, but not to be dealt with in any other way. My own four walls.

The last words form the refrain of a set of verses, the most characteristic, as Mr. Froude justly observes, of the

writer, the actual composition of which seems, however, to belong to the next chapter of his career, beginning :

The storm and night is on the waste,
Wild through the wind the huntsman calls,
As fast on willing nag I haste
Home to my own four walls.

The feeling that inspires them is clenched in the defiance :

King George has palaces of pride,
And armed grooms must ward those halls;
With one stout bolt I safe abide
Within my own four walls.

Not all his men may sever this;
It yields to friends', not monarchs' calls;
My whinstone house my castle is—
I have my own four walls.

When fools or knaves do make a rout,
With jigmen, dinners, balls, cabals,
I turn my back and shut them out:
These are my own four walls.

CHAPTER III.

CRAIGENPUTTOCK.

[1826-1834.]

"Ah, when she was young, she was a fleein', dancin', light-heartit thing, Jeannie Welsh, that naething would hae dauntit. But she grew grave a' at ance. There was Maister Irving, ye ken, that had been her teacher; and he cam' about her. Then there was Maister —. Then there was Maister Carlyle himsel', and *he* cam' to finish her off like."—HADDINGTON NURSE.

"My broom, as I sweep up the withered leaves, might be heard at a furlong's distance."—T. CARLYLE, from Craigenputtock, Oct., 1830.

DURING the last days at Hoddam Hill, Carlyle was on the verge of a crisis of his career, *i.e.* his making a marriage, for the chequered fortune of which he was greatly himself to blame.

No biography can ignore the strange conditions of a domestic life, already made familiar in so many records that they are past evasion. Various opinions have been held regarding the lady whom he selected to share his lot. Any adequate estimate of this remarkable woman belongs to an account of her own career, such as that given by Mrs. Ireland in her judicious and interesting abridgment of the material amply supplied. Jane Baillie Welsh (*b.* 1801, *d.* 1866)—descended on the paternal side from Elizabeth, the youngest daughter of John Knox; on the maternal owning to an inheritance of gipsy blood—belonged to a

family long esteemed in the borders. Her father, a distinguished Edinburgh student, and afterwards eminent surgeon at Haddington, noted alike for his humanity and skill, made a small fortune, and purchased in advance from his father his inheritance of Craigenputtock, a remnant of the once larger family estate. He died in 1819, when his daughter was in her eighteenth year. To her he left the now world-famous farm and the bulk of his property. Jane, of precocious talents, seems to have been, almost from infancy, the tyrant of the house at Haddington, where her people took a place of precedence in the small county town. Her grandfathers, John of Penfillan and Walter of Templand, also a Welsh, though of another the gipsy stock, vied for her baby favours, while her mother's quick and shifty tempers seem at that date to have combined in the process of "spoiling" her. The records of the schooldays of the juvenile Jane all point to a somewhat masculine strength of character. Through life, it must be acknowledged, this brilliant creature was essentially "a mocking-bird," and made game of every one till she met her mate. The little lady was learned, reading Virgil at nine, ambitious enough to venture a tragedy at fourteen, and cynical; writing to her life-long friend, Miss Eliza Stodart, of Haddington as a "bottomless pit of dullness," where "all my little world lay glittering in tinsel at my feet." She was ruthless to the suitors—as numerous, says Mr. Fronde, "as those of Penelope"—who flocked about the young beauty, wit, and heiress. Of the discarded rivals there was only one of note—George Rennie, long afterwards referred to by Carlyle as a "clever, decisive, very ambitious, but quite unmelodious young fellow whom we knew here (in Chelsea) as sculptor and M.P." She dismissed him in 1821 for some cause of displeasure, "due

to pride, reserve, and his soured temper about the world ;” but when he came to take leave, she confesses, “ I scarcely heard a word he said, my own heart beat so loud.” Years after, in London, she went by request of his wife to Rennie’s death-bed.

Meanwhile she had fallen under the spell of her tutor, Edward Irving, and, as she, after much *finesse* and evasion admitted, came to love him in earnest. Irving saw her weak points, saying she was apt to turn her powers to “ arts of cruelty which satire and scorn are,” and “ to contemplate the inferiority of others rather from the point of view of ridicule and contempt than of commiseration and relief.” Later she retaliated, “ There would have been no ‘ tongues ’ had Irving married me.” But he was fettered by a previous engagement, to which, after some struggle for release, he held, leaving in charge of his ward, as guide, philosopher, and friend, his old ally and successor, Thomas Carlyle. Between this exceptional pair there begun in 1821 a relationship of constant growth in intimacy, marked by frequent visits, conversations, confidences, and a correspondence, long, full, and varied, starting with interchange of literary sympathies, and sliding by degrees into the dangerous friendship called Platonical. At the outset it was plain that Carlyle was not the St. Preux or Wolmar whose ideas of elegance Jane Welsh—a hasty student of Rousseau—had set in unhappy contrast to the honest young swains of Haddington. Uncouth, ungainly in manner and attire, he first excited her ridicule even more than he attracted her esteem, and her written descriptions of him recall that of Johnson by Lord Chesterfield. “ He scrapes the fender, . . . only his tongue should be left at liberty, his other members are most fantastically awkward ;” but the poor mocking-bird had met her fate.

The correspondence falls under two sections, the critical and the personal. The critical consists of remarks, good, bad, and indifferent, on books and their writers. Carlyle began his siege by talking German to her, now extolling Schiller and Goethe to the skies, now, with a rare stretch of deference, half conniving at her sneers. Much also passed between them about English authors, among them comments on Byron, notably inconsistent. Of him Carlyle writes (April 15th, 1824) as "a pampered lord," who would care nothing for the £500 a year that would make an honest man happy; but later, on hearing of the death at Mesolonghi, more in the vein of his master Goethe, he exclaims:

Alas, poor Byron! the news of his death came upon me like a mass of lead; and yet the thought of it sends a painful twinge through all my being, as if I had lost a brother. O God! that so many souls of mud and clay should fill up their base existence to the utmost bound; and this, the noblest spirit in Europe, should sink before half his course was run. . . . Late so full of fire and generous passion and proud purposes, and now for ever dumb and cold. . . . Had he been spared to the age of three-score and ten what might he not have been! what might he not have been! . . . I dreamed of seeing him and knowing him; but . . . we shall go to him, he shall not return to us.

This in answer to her account of the same intelligence: "I was told it all alone in a room full of people. If they had said the sun or the moon was gone out of the heavens, it could not have struck me with the idea of a more awful and dreary blank in the creation than the words 'Byron is dead.'" Other letters of the same period, from London, are studded or disfigured by the incisive ill-natured sarcasms above referred to, or they relate to the work and prospects of the writer. Those that bear on the

progress of his suit mark it as the strangest and, when we look before and after, one of the saddest courtships in literary history. As early as 1822 Carlyle entertained the idea of making Jane Welsh his wife; she had begun to yield to the fascinations of his speech—a fascination akin to that of Burns—when she wrote, “I will be happier contemplating my beau-ideal than a real, substantial, eating, drinking, sleeping, honest husband.” In 1823 they were half-declared lovers, but there were recalcitrant fits on both sides. On occasion of a meeting at Edinburgh there was a quarrel, followed by a note of repentance, in which she confessed, “Nothing short of a devil could have tempted me to torment you and myself as I did on that unblest day.” Somewhat earlier she had written in answer to his first distinct avowal, “My friend, I love you. But were you my brother I should love you the same. No. Your friend I will be . . . while I breathe the breath of life; but your wife never, though you were as rich as Cræsus, as honoured and renowned as you yet shall be.” To which Carlyle answered with characteristic pride, “I have no idea of dying in the Arcadian shepherd’s style for the disappointment of hopes which I never seriously entertained, and had no right to entertain seriously.” There was indeed nothing of Corydon and Phillis in this struggle of two strong wills, the weaker giving way to the stronger, the gradual but inexorable closing of an iron ring. Backed by the natural repugnance of her mother to the match, Miss Welsh still rebelled, bracing herself with the reflection, “Men and women may be very charming without having any genius;” and to his renewed appeal (1825), “It lies with you whether I shall be a right man or only a hard and bitter Stoic,” retorting, “I am not in love with you . . . my affections are in a state of perfect tranquillity.”

But she admitted he was her "only fellowship and support," and confiding at length the truth about Irving, surrendered in the words, "Decide, and woe to me if your reason be your judge and not your love." In this duel of Puck and Theseus, the latter felt he had won and pressed his advantage, offering to let her free and adding warnings to the blind, "Without great sacrifices on both sides, the possibility of our union is an empty dream." At the eleventh hour, when, in her own words, she was "married past redemption," he wrote, "If you judge fit, I will take you to my heart this very week. If you judge fit, I will this very week forswear you for ever;" and replied to her request that her widowed mother might live under their wedded roof in terms that might have become Petruchio: "It may be stated in a word. The man should bear rule in the house, not the woman. This is an eternal axiom, the law of nature which no mortal departs from unpunished. . . . Will your mother consent to make me her guardian and director, and be a second wife to her daughter's husband?"

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd,
Was ever woman in this humour won?

Miss Welsh at length reluctantly agreed to come to start life at Scotsbrig, where his family had migrated; but Carlyle pushed another counter: "Your mother must not visit mine: the mere idea of such a visit argued too plainly that you *knew nothing* of the family circle in which for my sake you were willing to take a place." It being agreed that Mrs. Welsh was to leave Haddington, where the alliance was palpably unpopular, Carlyle proposed to begin married life in his step-mother's vacant house, saying in effect to his bride-elect that as for intrusive visitors he had "nerve

enough " to kick her old friends out of doors. The line of complaisance being drawn here, the bridegroom-elect had to soothe his sense of even this slight submission by a scolding letter; while in answer to the question of finance he pointed out that he had £200 to start with, and that a labourer and his wife had been known to live on £14 a year.

On the edge of the great change in her life, Jane Welsh writes, " I am resolved in spirit, in the face of every horrible fate," and says she has decided to put off mourning for her father, having found a second father. Carlyle proposed that after the " dreaded ceremony " he and his bride and his brother John should travel together by the stage-coach from Dumfries to Edinburgh. In " the last dying speech and marrying words " she objects to this arrangement, and after the event (October 17th, 1826) they drove in a post-chaise to 21 Comely Bank, where Mrs. Welsh, now herself settled at Templeland, had furnished a house for them. Meanwhile the Carlyle family migrated to Scotsbrig. There followed eighteen comparatively tranquil months, an oasis in the wilderness, where the anomalous pair lived in some respects like other people. They had seats in church, and social gatherings—Wednesday " At Homes," to which the celebrity of their brilliant conversational powers attracted the brightest spirits of the northern capital, among them Sir William Hamilton, Sir David Brewster, John Wilson, De Quincey, forgiven for his review, and above all Jeffrey, a friend, though of opposite character, nearly as true as Irving himself. Procter had introduced Carlyle to the famous editor, who, as a Scotch cousin of the Welshes, took from the first a keen interest in the still struggling author, and opened to him the door of the *Edinburgh Review*. The appearance of the article on *Richter*, 1827, and that,

in the course of the same year, on *The State of German Literature*, marks the beginning of a long series of splendid historical and critical essays—closing in 1855 with the *Prinzenraub*—which set Carlyle in the front of the reviewers of the century. The success in the *Edinburgh* was an “open sesame;” and the conductors of the *Foreign* and *Foreign Quarterly Reviews*, later, those of *Frazer* and the *Westminster*, were ready to receive whatever the new writer might choose to send.

To the *Foreign Review* he contributed from Comely Bank the *Life and Writings of Werner*, a paper on *Helena*, the leading episode of the second part of “Faust,” and the first of the two great Essays on *Goethe*, which fixed his place as the interpreter of Germany to England. In midsummer, 1827, Carlyle received a letter from Goethe cordially acknowledging the *Life of Schiller*, and enclosing presents of books for himself and his wife. This, followed by a later inquiry as to the author of the article on *German Literature*, was the opening of a correspondence of sage advice on the one side and of lively gratitude on the other, that lasted till the death of the veteran in 1832. Goethe assisted, or tried to assist, his admirer by giving him a testimonial in a candidature for the Chair (vacant by the promotion of Dr. Chalmers) of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews. Jeffrey, a frequent visitor and host of the Carlyles, still regarded as “a jewel of advocates . . . the most lovable of little men,” urged and aided the canvass, but in vain. The testimonials were too strong to be judicious, and “it was enough that” the candidate “was described as a man of original and extraordinary gifts to make college patrons shrink from contact with him.” Another failure, about the same date and with the same backing, was an application for a Professorship in London Uni-

versity, practically under the patronage of Brougham; yet another, of a different kind, was Carlyle's attempt to write a novel, which having been found—better before than after publication—to be a failure, was for the most part burnt. "He could not," says Fronde, "write a novel any more than he could write poetry. He had no *invention*.¹ His genius was for fact; to lay hold on truth, with all his intellect and all his imagination. He could no more invent than he could lie."

The remaining incidents of Carlyle's Edinburgh life are few: a visit from his mother; a message from Goethe transmitting a medal for Sir Walter Scott; sums generously sent for his brother John's medical education in Germany; loans to Alexander, and a frustrate scheme for starting a new Annual Register, designed to be a literary *résumé* of the year, make up the record. The "rift in the lute," Carlyle's incapacity for domestic life, was already showing itself. Within the course of an orthodox honeymoon he had begun to shut himself up in interior solitude, seldom saw his wife from breakfast till 4 P.M., when they dined together and read *Don Quixote* in Spanish. The husband was half forgotten in the author beginning to prophesy: he wrote alone, walked alone, thought alone, and for the most part talked alone, *i.e.* in monologue that did not wait or care for answer. There was respect, there was affection,

¹ Carlyle's verses also demonstrate that he had no metrical ear. The only really good lines he ever wrote, save in translations where the rhythm was set to him, are those constantly quoted about the dawn of "another blue day." Those sent to his mother on "Proud Hapsburg," and to Jane Welsh before marriage are unworthy of Macaulay's school-boy, "Non di non homines," but it took much hammering to persuade Carlyle of the fact, and when persuaded he concluded that verse-writing was a mere tinkling of cymbals!

but there was little companionship. Meanwhile, despite the *Review* articles, Carlyle's other works, especially the volumes on German romance, were not succeeding, and the mill had to grind without grist. It seemed doubtful if he could longer afford to live in Edinburgh; he craved after greater quiet, and when the farm, which was the main Welsh inheritance, fell vacant, resolved on migrating thither. His wife yielding, though with a natural repugnance to the extreme seclusion in store for her, and the Jeffreys kindly assisting, they went together in May, 1828, to the Hill of the Hawks.

Craigenputtock is by no means "the dreariest spot in all the British dominions." On a sunny day it is an inland home, with wide billowy straths of grass around, inestimable silence broke only by the placid bleating of sheep, and the long rolling ridges of the Solway hills in front. But in the "winter wind," girt by drifts of snow, no post or apothecary within fifteen miles, it may be dreary enough. Here Carlyle allowed his wife to serve him through six years of household drudgery; an offence for which he was never quite forgiven, and to estimate its magnitude here seems the proper place. He was a model son and brother, and his conjugal fidelity has been much appraised, but he was as unfit, and for some of the same reasons, to make "a happy fireside clime" as was Jonathan Swift; and less even than Byron had he a share of the mutual forbearance which is essential to the closest of all relations.

"Napoleon," says Emerson, "to achieve his ends risked everything and spared nothing, neither ammunition, nor money, nor troops, nor generals, nor himself." With a slight change of phrase the same may be said of Carlyle's devotion to his work. There is no more prevailing refrain in his writing, public and private, than his denunciation of

literature as a profession, nor any wiser words than those in which the veteran warns the young men, whose questions he answers with touching solicitude, against its adoption. "It should be," he declares, "the wine not the food of life, the ardent spirits of thought and fancy without the bread of action parches up nature and makes strong souls like Byron dangerous, the weak despicable." But it was nevertheless the profession of his deliberate choice, and he soon found himself bound to it as Ixion to his wheel. The most thorough worker on record, he found nothing easy that was great, and he would do nothing little. In his determination to pluck out the heart of the mystery, be it of himself, as in *Sartor* ; of Germany, as in his Goethes and Richters ; the state of England, as in *Chartism* and *Past and Present* ; of *Cromwell* or of *Friedrich*, he faced all obstacles and overthrew them. Dauntless and ruthless, he allowed nothing to divert or to mar his designs, least of all domestic cares or even duties. "Selfish he was"—I again quote from his biographer—"if it be selfish to be ready to sacrifice every person dependent on him as completely as he sacrificed himself." What such a man wanted was a house-keeper and a nurse, not a wife, and when we consider that he had chosen for the latter companionship a woman almost as ambitious as himself, whose conversation was only less brilliant than his own, of delicate health and dainty ways, loyal to death, but, according to Mr. Froude, in some respects "as hard as flint," with "dangerous sparks of fire," whose quick temper found vent in sarcasms that blistered and words like swords, who could declare during the time of the engagement, to which in spite of warnings manifold she clung, "I will not marry to live on less than my natural and artificial wants ;" who, ridiculing his accent to his face and before his friends, could write, "apply your

talents to gild over the inequality of our births;" and who found herself obliged to live sixteen miles from the nearest neighbour, to milk a cow, scour floors and mend shoes—when we consider all this we are constrained to admit that the 17th October, 1826, was a *dies nefastus*, nor wonder that thirty years later Mrs. Carlyle wrote, "I married for ambition, Carlyle has exceeded all that my wildest hopes ever imagined of him, and I am miserable"—and to a young friend, "My dear, whatever you do, never marry a man of genius."

Carlyle's own references to the life at Craigenputtock are marked by all his aggravating inconsistency. "How happy we shall be in this Craig o' Putta," he writes to his wife from Scotsbrig, April 17th, 1827; and later to Goethe:

Here Rousseau would have been as happy as on his island of Saint Pierre. My town friends indeed ascribe my sojourn here to a similar disposition, and forbode me no good results. But I came here solely with the design to simplify my way of life, and to secure the independence through which I could be enabled to be true to myself. This bit of earth is our own; here we can live, write, and think as best pleases ourselves, even though Zoilus himself were to be crowned the monarch of literature. From some of our heights I can descry, about a day's journey to the west, the hill where Agricola and the Romans left a camp behind them. At the foot of it I was born, and there both father and mother still live to love me. . . . The only piece of any importance that I have written since I came here is an Essay on Burns.

This Essay, modified at first then let alone by Jeffrey, appeared in the *Edinburgh* in the autumn of 1828. We turn to Carlyle's journal and find the entry, "Finished a paper on Burns at this Devil's Den," elsewhere referred to as a "gaunt and hungry Siberia." Later still he confesses,

when preparing for his final move south, "Of solitude I have really had enough."

Romæ Tibur amem ventosus, Tibure Romam.

Carlyle in the moor was always sighing for the town, and in the town for the moor. During the first twenty years of his London life, in what he called "the Devil's oven," he is constantly clamouring to return to the den. His wife, more and more forlorn though ever loyal, consistently disliked it; little wonder, between sluttish maid-servants, and owl-like solitude: and she expressed her dislike in the pathetic verses, "To a Swallow Building under our Eaves," sent to Jeffrey in 1832, and ending:

God speed thee, pretty bird; may thy small nest
With little ones all in good time be blest;
I love thee much,
For well thou managest that life of thine,
While I! Oh, ask not what I do with mine,
Would I were such! *The Desert.*

The monotony of the moorland life was relieved by visits of relations and others made and repaid, an excursion to Edinburgh, a residence in London, and the production of work, the best of which has a chance of living with the language. One of the most interesting of the correspondences of this period is a series of letters, addressed to an anonymous Edinburgh friend who seems to have had some idea of abandoning his profession of the Law for Literature, a course against which Carlyle strenuously protests. From these letters, which have only appeared in the columns of the *Glasgow Herald*, we may extract a few sentences:

Don't disparage the work that gains your bread. What is all work but a drudgery? no labour for the present joyous, but grievous. A

man who has nothing to admire except himself is in the minimum state. The question is, Does a man really love Truth, or only the market price of it? Even literary men should have something else to do. Kames was a lawyer, Roscoe a merchant, Hans Sachs a cobbler, Burns a gauger, etc.

The following singular passage, the style of which suggests an imitation of Sterne, is the acme of unconscious self-satire:

You are infinitely unjust to Blockheads, as they are called. Ask yourself seriously within your own heart—what right have you to live wisely in God's world, and they not to live a little wisely? Is there a man more to be condoled with, nay, I will say to be cherished and tenderly treated, than a man that has no brain. My Purse is empty, it can be filled again; the Jew Rothschild could fill it; or I can even live with it very far from full. But, gracious heavens! what is to be done with my *empty Head*?

Three of the visits of this period are memorable. Two from the Jeffreys (in 1828 and 1830) leave us with the same uncomfortable impression of kindness ungrudgingly bestowed and grudgingly received. Jeffrey had a double interest in the household at Craigenputtock—an almost brotherly regard for the wife, and a belief, restrained by the range of a keen though limited appreciation, in the powers of the husband, to whom he wrote: "Take care of the fair creature who has entrusted herself so entirely to you," and with a half truth, "You have no mission upon earth, whatever you may fancy, half so important as to be innocently happy." And again: "Bring your blooming Eve out of your blasted Paradise, and seek shelter in the lower world." But Carlyle held to the "banner with a strange device," and was either deaf or indignant. The visits passed, with satirical references from

both the host and hostess; for Mrs. Carlyle, who could herself abundantly scoff and scold, would allow the liberty to no one else. Jeffrey meanwhile was never weary of well-doing. Previous to his promotion as Lord Advocate and consequent transference to London, he tried to negotiate for Carlyle's appointment as his successor in the editorship of the *Review*, but failed to make him accept the necessary conditions. The paper entitled *Signs of the Times* was the last production that he had to revise for his eccentric friend. Those following on Taylor's *German Literature* and the *Characteristics* were brought out in 1831 under the auspices of Macvey Napier. The other visit was from the most illustrious of Carlyle's English-speaking friends, in many respects a fellow-worker, yet "a spirit of another sort," and destined, though a transcendental mystic, to be the most practical of his benefactors. Twenty-four hours of Ralph Waldo Emerson (often referred to in the course of a long and intimate correspondence) are spoken of by Mrs. Carlyle as a visit from the clouds, brightening the prevailing gray. He came to the remote inland home with "the pure intellectual gleam" of which Hawthorne speaks, and "the quiet night of clear fine talk" remained one of the memories which led Carlyle afterwards to say, "Perhaps our happiest days were spent at the Craig." Goethe's letters, especially that in which he acknowledges a lock of Mrs. Carlyle's hair, "eine unvergleichliche schwarze Haar locke," were also among the gleams of 1829. The great German died three years later, after receiving the birthday tribute in his 82d year from English friends; and it is pleasant to remember that in this instance the disciple was to the end loyal to his master. To this period belong many other correspondences. "I am scribble scribbling," he says in a

letter of 1832, and mere scribbling may fill many pages with few headaches; but Carlyle wrestled as he wrote, and not a page of those marvellous *Miscellanies* but is red with his life's blood. Under all his reviewing, he was set on a work whose fortunes were to be the strangest, whose result was, in some respects, the widest of his efforts. The plan of *Sartor Resartus* is far from original. Swift's *Tale of a Tub* distinctly anticipated the Clothes Philosophy; there are besides manifest obligations to Reinecke Fuchs, Jean Paul Richter, and other German authors: but in our days originality is only possible in the handling; Carlyle has made an imaginary German professor the mere mouth-piece of his own and the higher aspiration of the Scotland of his day, and it remains the most popular as surely as his *Friedrich* is the greatest of his works. The author was abundantly conscious of the value of the book, and superabundantly angry at the unconsciousness of the literary patrons of the time. In 1821 he resolved if possible to go up to London to push the prospects of this first-born male child. The *res angusta* stood in the way. Jeffrey, after asking his friend "what situation he could get him that he would detest the least," pressed on him "in the coolest, lightest manner the use of his purse." This Carlyle, to the extent of £50 as a loan (carefully returned), was induced ultimately to accept. It has been said that "proud men never wholly forgive those to whom they feel themselves obliged," but their resenting of benefits is the worst feature of their pride. Carlyle made his second visit to London to seek types for *Sartor*, in vain. Always preaching reticence with the sound of artillery, he vents in many pages the rage of his chagrin at the "Arimaspian" publishers, who would not print his book, and the public which, "dosed with froth," would not buy

it. The following is little softened by the chiaroscuro of five and thirty years :

Done, I think, at Craigenputtock between January and August, 1830, *Teufelsdröckh* was ready, and I decided to make for London ; night before going, how I remember it ! . . . The beggarly history of poor *Sartor* among the blockheadisms is not worth recording or remembering, least of all here ! In short, finding that I had got £100 (if memory serve) for *Schiller* six or seven years before, and for *Sartor*, at least twice as good, I could not only not get £200, but even get no Murray or the like to publish it on half profits. Murray, a most stupendous object to me, tumbling about eyeless, with the evidently strong wish to say "Yes" and "No"—my first signal experience of that sad human predicament. I said, We will make it "No," then ; wrap up our MS., and carry it about for some two years from one terrified owl to another ; published at last experimentally in *Fraser*, and even then mostly laughed at, nothing coming of the volume except what was sent by Emerson from America.

This summary is unfair to Murray, who was inclined, on Jeffrey's recommendation, to accept the book ; but on finding that Carlyle had carried the MS. to Longmans and another publisher, in hopes of a better bargain, and that it had been refused, naturally wished to refer the matter to his "reader," and the negotiation closed. *Sartor* struggled into half life in parts of the magazine to which the writer had already contributed several of his German essays, and it was even then published with reluctance, and on half pay. The reception of this work, a nondescript, yet among the finest prose poems in our language, seemed to justify bookseller, editor, and readers alike, for the British public in general were of their worst opinion. "It is a heap of clotted nonsense," pronounced the *Sun*. "Stop that stuff or stop my paper," wrote one of *Fraser's* constituents. "When is that stupid series of articles by the crazy tailor going to end?" cried another. At this time

Carlyle used to say there were only two people who found anything in his book worth reading—Emerson and a priest in Cork, who said to the editor that he would take the magazine when anything in it appeared by the author of *Sartor*. The volume was only published in 1838, by Saunders and Otley, after the *French Revolution* had further raised the writer's name, and then on a guarantee from friends willing to take the risk of loss. It does not appear whether Carlyle refers to this edition or to some slighter reissue of the magazine articles when he writes in the *Reminiscences*: "I sent off six copies to six Edinburgh literary friends, from not one of whom did I get the smallest whisper even of receipt—a thing disappointing more or less to human nature, and which has silently and insensibly led me never since to send any copy of a book to Edinburgh. . . . The plebs of literature might be divided in their verdicts about me; though by count of heads I always suspect the guilty clear had it; but the conscript fathers declined to vote at all."¹ In America *Sartor* was pieced together from *Fraser*, published in a volume introduced by Alexander Everett, extolled by Emerson as "A criticism of the spirit of the age in which we live; exhibiting in the most just and novel light the present aspect of religion, politics, literature, and social life." The editors add: "We believe no book has been published for many years . . . which discovers an equal mastery over all the riches of the language. The author makes ample amends for the occasional eccentricity of his genius not only by frequent bursts of pure splendour, but by the wit and sense which never fail him."

¹ *Tempora mutantur*. A few months before Carlyle's death a cheap edition of *Sartor* was issued, and 30,000 copies were sold within a few weeks.

Americans are intolerant of honest criticism on themselves, but they are, more than any other nation, open to appreciate vigorous expressions of original views of life and ethics—all that we understand by philosophy—and equally so to new forms of art. The leading critics of the New England have often been the first and best testers of the fresh products of the Old. A land of experiment in all directions, ranging from Mount Lebanon to Oneida Creek, has been ready to welcome the suggestions, physical or metaphysical, of startling enterprise. Ideas which filter slowly through English soil and abide for generations, flash over the electric atmosphere of the West. Hence Coleridge, Carlyle, and Browning were already accepted as prophets in Boston while their own countrymen were still examining their credentials. To this readiness, as of a photographic plate, to receive, must be added the fact that the message of *Sartor* crossed the Atlantic when the hour to receive it had struck. To its publication has been attributed the origin of a movement that was almost simultaneously inaugurated by Emerson's *Harvard Discourse*. It was a revolt against the reign of Commerce in practice, Calvinism in theory, and precedent in Art that gave birth to the Transcendentalism of *The Dial*—a Pantheon in which Carlyle had at once assigned to him a place. He meanwhile was busy in London making friends by his conspicuous, almost obtrusive, genius, and sowing the seeds of discord by his equally obtrusive spleen. To his visit of 1831-1832 belongs one of the worst of the elaborate invectives against Lamb which have recoiled on the memory of his critic—to the credit of English sympathies with the most lovable of slightly erring men—with more than the force of a boomerang. A sheaf of sharp sayings of the same date owe their sting to their

half truth, *e.g.* to a man who excused himself for profligate journalism on the old plea, "I must live, sir." "No, sir, you need not live, if your body cannot be kept together without selling your soul." Similarly he was abusing the periodicals — "mud," "sand," and "dust magazines"—to which he had contributed, *inter alia*, the great Essay on *Voltaire* and the consummate sketch of *Novalis*; with the second paper on *Richter* to the *Foreign Review*, the reviews of *History* and of *Schiller* to *Fraser*, and that on *Goethe's Works* to the *Foreign Quarterly*. During this period he was introduced to Molesworth, Austin, and J. S. Mill. On his summons, October 1st, 1832, Mrs. Carlyle came up to Ampton Street, where he then resided, to see him safe through the rest of his London time. They lamented over the lapse of Irving, now lost in the delirium of tongues, and made a league of friendship with Mill, whom he describes as "a partial disciple of mine," a friendship that stood a hard test, but was broken when the author of *Liberty* naturally found it impossible to remain a disciple of the writer of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. Mill, like Napier, was at first staggered by the *Characteristics*, though he afterwards said it was one of Carlyle's greatest works, and was enthusiastic over the review of Boswell's *Johnson*, published in *Fraser* in the course of this year. Meanwhile Margaret, Carlyle's favourite sister, had died, and his brightest, Jean, "the Crow," had married her cousin, James Aitken. In memory of the former he wrote as a master of threnody: to the bridegroom of the latter he addressed a letter reminding him of the duties of a husband, "to do as he would be done by to his wife!" In 1832 John, again by Jeffrey's aid, obtained a situation at £300 a year as travelling physician to Lady Clare, and was enabled, as he promptly

did, to pay back his debts. Alexander seems to have been still struggling with an imperfectly successful farm. In the same year, when Carlyle was in London, his father died at Scotsbrig, after a residence there of six years. His son saw him last in August, 1831, when, referring to his Craigenputtock solitude, he said: "Man, it's surely a pity that thou shouldst sit yonder with nothing but the eye of Omniscience to see thee, and thou with such a gift to speak."

The Carlyles returned in March, she to her domestic services, baking bread, preserving eggs, and brightening grates till her eyes grew dim; he to work at his *Diderot*, doing justice to a character more alien to his own than even Voltaire's, reading twenty-five volumes, one per day, to complete the essay; then at *Count Cagliostro*, also for *Fraser*, a link between his last Craigenputtock and his first London toils. The period is marked by shoals of letters, a last present from Weimar, a visit to Edinburgh, and a candidature for a University Chair,¹ which Carlyle thought Jeffrey could have got for him; but the advocate did not, probably could not, in this case satisfy his client. In excusing himself he ventured to lecture the applicant on what he imagined to be the impracticable temper and perverse eccentricity which had retarded and might continue to retard his advancement. Carlyle, never tolerant of rebuke however just, was indignant, and though an open quarrel was avoided by letters on both sides of courteous compromise, the breach was in reality never healed, and Jeffrey has a niche in the *Reminiscences* as a "little man who meant well, but did not see far or know much." Carlyle went on, however, like Thor, at the *Diamond Neck-*

¹ The last was in 1836, for the Chair of Astronomy in Glasgow.

lace, which is a proem to the *French Revolution*, but inly growling, "My own private impression is that I shall never get any promotion in this world." "A prophet is not readily acknowledged in his own country;" "Mein Leben geht sehr übel: all dim, misty, squally, disheartening at times, almost heart-breaking." This is the prose rather than the male of Byron. Of all men Carlyle could least reckon his own rede. He never even tried to consume his own smoke. His *Sartor* is indeed more contained, and takes at its summit a higher flight than Rousseau's *Confessions*, or the *Sorrows of Werther*, or the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*: but reading Byron's letters is mingling with a world gay and grave; reading Goethe's walking in the Parthenon, though the Graces in the niches are sometimes unclad; reading Carlyle's is travelling through glimpses of sunny fields and then plunging into coal-black tunnels. At last he decided, "Puttock is no longer good for me," and his brave wife approving, and even inciting, he resolved to burn his ships and seek his fortune—sink or swim—in the metropolis. Carlyle, for once taking the initiative of practical trouble, went in advance on a house-hunt to London, and by advice of Leigh Hunt fixed on the now famous house in Chelsea, near the Thames.

CHAPTER IV.

CHEYNE ROW.

[1834-1842.]

THE curtain falls on Craigenputtock, the bleak farm by the bleak hills, and rises on Cheyne Row, a side street off the river Thames, winding as slowly by the reaches of Barnes and Battersea as Cowper's Ouse, dotted with brown-sailed ships and holiday boats in place of the excursion steamers that now stop at Carlyle Pier; hard by the Carlyle Statue on the new (1874) Embankment, in front the "Carlyle mansions," a stone's-throw from "Carlyle Square." Turning up the row, we find over No. 24, formerly No. 5, the Carlyle medallion in marble, marking the house where the Chelsea prophet, rejected, recognised, and adulated of men, lived over a stretch of forty-seven years. Here were his headquarters, but he was a frequent wanderer. About half the time was occupied in trips almost yearly to Scotland, one to Ireland, one to Belgium, one to France, and two to Germany; besides, in the later days, constant visits to admiring friends, more and more drawn from the higher ranks in English society, the members of which learnt to appreciate his genius before he found a hearing among the mass of the people.

The whole period falls readily under four sections marking as many phases of the author's outer and inner life, while the same character is preserved throughout:

- I. 1834–1842—When the death of Mrs. Welsh and the late success of Carlyle's work relieved him from a long, sometimes severe struggle with narrow means. It is the period of the *French Revolution*, *The Lectures*, and *Hero-Worship*, and of *Chartism*, the last work with a vestige of adherence to the Radical creed.
- II. 1842–1853—When the death of his mother loosened his ties to the North. This decade of his literary career is mainly signalised by the writing and publication of the *Life and Letters of Cromwell*, of Carlyle's political works, *Past and Present* and the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, and of the *Life of Sterling*, works which mark his now consummated disbelief in democracy, and his distinct abjuration of adherence, in any ordinary sense, to the "Creed of Christendom."
- III. 1853–1866—When the laurels of his triumphant speech as Lord Rector at Edinburgh were suddenly withered by the death of his wife. This period is filled with the *History of Frederick II.*, and marked by a yet more decidedly accentuated trust in autocracy.
- IV. 1866–1881—Fifteen years of the setting of the sun.

The Carlyles, coming to the metropolis in a spirit of rarely realised audacity on a reserve fund of from £200 to £300 at most, could not propose to establish themselves in any centre of fashion. In their circumstances their choice of abode was on the whole a fortunate one. Chelsea,

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it,

was, even in those days of less constant communication, within measurable distance of the centres of London life: it had then and still preserves a host of interesting historic and literary traditions. Among the men who in old times lived or met together in that outlying region of London, we have memories of Sir Thomas More and of Erasmus, of the Essayists Addison and Steele, and of Swift. Hard by is the tomb of Bolingbroke and the square of Sir Hans Sloane; Smollett lived for a time in Laurence Street; nearer our own day, Turner resided in Cheyne Walk, later George Eliot, W. B. Scott, Dante Rossetti, Swinburne for a season, and George Meredith. When Carlyle came to settle there, Leigh Hunt¹ in Upper Cheyne Row, an almost next-door neighbour, was among the first of a series of visitors; always welcome, despite his "hugger-mugger" household and his borrowing tendencies, his "unpractical messages" and "rose-coloured reform processes," as a bright "singing bird, musical in flowing talk," abounding in often subtle criticisms and constant good-humour. To the Chelsea home, since the Mecca of many pilgrims, there also flocked other old Ampton Street friends, drawn thither by genuine regard. Mrs. Carlyle, by the testimony of Miss Cushman and all competent judges, was a "*raconteur* unparalleled." To quote the same authority, "that wonderful woman, able to live in the full light of Carlyle's genius without being overwhelmed by it," had a peculiar skill in drawing out the most brilliant conversationalist of the age.

¹ Cf. Byron's account of the same household at Pisa. Carlyle deals very leniently with the malignant volume on Byron which amply justified the epigram of Moore. But he afterwards spoke more slightly of his little satellite, attributing the faint praise, in the *Examiner*, of the second course of lectures to Hunt's jealousy of a friend now "beginning to be somebody."

Burns and Wilson were his Scotch predecessors in an art of which the close of our century—when every fresh thought is treasured to be printed and paid for—knows little but the shadow. Of Carlyle, as of Johnson, it might have been said, “There is no use arguing with him, for if his pistol misses fire he knocks you down with the butt:” both men would have benefited by revolt from their dictation, but the power to contradict either was overborne by a superior power to assert. Swift’s occasional insolence, in like manner, prevailed by reason of the colossal strength that made him a Gulliver in Lilliput. Carlyle in earlier, as in later times, would have been the better of meeting his mate, or of being overmatched; but there was no Wellington found for this “grand Napoleon of the realms” of prose. His reverence for men, if not for things, grew weaker with the strengthening of his sway, a sway due to the fact that men of extensive learning are rarely men of incisive force, and Carlyle—in this respect more akin to Johnson than to Swift—had the acquired material to serve as fuel for the inborn fire. Hence the least satisfactory of his criticisms are those passed on his peers. Injustices of conversation should be pardoned to an impulsive nature, even those of correspondence in the case of a man who had a mania for pouring out his moods to all and sundry; but where Carlyle has carefully recarved false estimates in cameo, his memory must abide the consequence. Quite late in life, referring to the Chelsea days, he says, “The best of those who then flocked about us was Leigh Hunt,” who never seriously said him nay; “and the worst Lamb,” who was not among the worshippers. No one now doubts that Carlyle’s best adviser and most candid critic might have been John Stuart Mill, for whom he long felt as much regard as it was possible for him to entertain towards a

proximate equal. The following is characteristic: "He had taken a great attachment to me (which lasted about ten years and then suddenly ended, I never knew how), an altogether clear, logical, honest, amicable, affectionate young man, and respected as such here, though sometimes felt to be rather colourless, even aqueous, no religion in any form traceable in him." And similarly of his friend, Mrs. Taylor, "She was a will-o'-the-wispish iridescence of a creature; meaning nothing bad either;" and again of Mill himself, "His talk is sawdustish, like ale when there is no wine to be had." Such criticisms, some ungrateful, others unjust, may be relieved by reference to the close of two friendships to which (though even these were clouded by a touch of personal jealousy) he was faithful in the main; for the references of both husband and wife to Irving's "delirations" are the tears due to the sufferings of errant minds. Their last glimpse of this best friend of earlier days was in October, 1834, when he came on horseback to the door of their new home, and left with the benediction to his lost Jane, "You have made a little Paradise around you." He died in Glasgow in the December of the same year, and his memory is pathetically embalmed in Carlyle's threnody. The final phases of another old relationship were in some degree similar. During the first years of their settlement, Lord Jeffrey frequently called at Cheyne Row, and sent kind letters to his cousin, received by her husband with the growl, "I am at work stern and grim, not to be interrupted by Jeffrey's theoretic flourish of epistolary trumpeting." Carlyle, however, paid more than one visit to Craigerook, seeing his host for the last time in the autumn of 1849, "worn in body and thin in mind," "grown lunar now and not solar any more." Three months later he heard of the death of this benefactor of his youth, and

wrote the memorial which finds its place in the second volume of the *Reminiscences*.

The work "stern and grim" was the *French Revolution*, the production of which is the dominant theme of the first chapter of Carlyle's London life. Mr. Froude, in the course of an estimate of this work which leaves little room for other criticism, dwells on the fact that it was written for a purpose, *i.e.* to show that rulers, like those of the French in the eighteenth century, who are solely bent on the pleasures and oblivious of the duties of life, must end by being "burnt up." This, doubtless, is one of the morals of the *French Revolution*—the other being that anarchy ends in despotism—and unquestionably a writer who never ceased to be a preacher must have had it in his mind. But Carlyle's peculiarity is that he combined the functions of a prophet and of an artist, and that while now the one, now the other, was foremost, he never wholly forgot the one in the other. In this instance he found a theme well fit for both, and threw his heart into it, though under much discouragement. Despite the Essays, into each of which he had put work enough for a volume, the Reviews were shy of him; while his *Sartor* had, on this side of the Atlantic, been received mainly with jeers. Carlyle, never unconscious of his prerogative and apostolic primogeniture, felt like a knight who had performed his vigils, and finding himself still ignored, became a knight of the rueful countenance. Thoroughly equipped, adept enough in ancient tongues to appreciate Homer, a master of German and a fluent reader of French, a critic whose range stretched from Diderot to John Knox, he regarded his treatment as "tragically hard," exclaiming, "I could learn to do all things I have seen done, and am forbidden to try any of them." The efforts to keep the wolf from his own doors were harder

than any but a few were till lately aware of. Landed in London with his £200 reserve, he could easily have made way in the usual ruts; but he would have none of them, and refused to accept the employment which is the most open, as it is the most lucrative, to literary aspirants. To nine out of ten the "profession of literature" means Journalism; while Journalism often means dishonesty, always conformity. Carlyle was, in a sense deeper than that of the sects, essentially a nonconformist; he not only disdained to write a word he did not believe, he would not suppress a word he did believe—a rule of action fatal to swift success. During these years there began an acquaintance, soon ripening into intimacy, the memories of which are enshrined in one of the most beautiful of biographies.

Carlyle's relation to John Sterling drew out the sort of affection which best suited him—the love of a master for a pupil, of superior for inferior, of the benefactor for the benefited; and consequently there is no line in the record of it that jars. Sterling once tried to benefit his friend, and perhaps fortunately failed. He introduced Carlyle to his father, then the editor of the *Times*, and the latter promptly invited the struggling author to contribute to its columns, but, according to Mr. Froude, "on the implied conditions . . . when a man enlists in the army, his soul as well as his body belong to his commanding officer." Carlyle talked, all his life, about what his greatest disciple calls "The Lamp of Obedience;" but he himself would obey no one, and found it hard to be civil to those who did not see with his eyes. He rejected—we trust in polite terms—the offer of "the Thunderer." "In other respects also," says our main authority, "he was impracticable, unmalleable, and as independent and wilful as if he were the heir to a peerage. He had created no 'public' of his

own; the public which existed could not understand his writings and would not buy them; and thus it was that in Cheyne Row he was more neglected than he had been in Scotland." Welcome to a limited range of literary society, he astonished and amused by his vehement eloquence, but when crossed he was not only "sarcastic" but rude, and speaking of people, as he wrote of them, with various shades of contempt, naturally gave frequent offence. Those whose toes are trodden on, not by accident, justifiably retaliate. "Are you looking for your t-t-turban?" Charles Lamb is reported to have said in some entertainer's lobby after listening for an evening to his invectives, and the phrase may have rankled in Carlyle's mind. Living in a glass case, while throwing stones about, supersensitive to criticism though professing to despise critics, he made at least as many enemies as friends, and by his own confession became an Ishmaelite. In view of the reception of *Sartor*, we do not wonder to find him writing in 1833:

It is twenty-three months since I earned a penny by the craft of literature, and yet I know no fault I have committed. . . . I am tempted to go to America. . . . I shall quit literature, it does not invite me. Providence warns me to have done with it. I have failed in the Divine Infernal Universe.

Or meditating, when at the lowest ebb, to go wandering about the world like Teufelsdröckh, looking for a rest for the sole of his foot. And yet all the time, with incomparable naïveté, he was asserting:

The longer I live among this people the deeper grows my feeling of natural superiority to them. . . . The literary world here is a thing which I have no other course left me but to defy. . . . I can reverence no existing man. With health and peace for one year, I could write a better book than there has been in this country for generations.

All through his journal and his correspondence there is a perpetual alternation of despair and confidence, always closing with the refrain, "Working, trying is the only remover of doubt," and wise counsels often echoed from Goethe, "Accomplish as well as you can the task on hand, and the next step will become clear;" on the other hand—

A man must not only be able to work but to give over working. . . . If a man wait till he has entirely brushed off his imperfections, he will spin for ever on his axis, advancing no whither. . . . The *French Revolution* stands pretty fair in my head, nor do I mean to investigate much more about it, but to splash down what I know in large masses of colours, that it may look like a smoke and flame conflagration in the distance.

The progress of this work was retarded by the calamity familiar to every reader, but it must be referred to as throwing one of the finest lights on his character. Carlyle's closest intellectual link with J. S. Mill was their common interest in French politics and literature; the latter, himself meditating a history of the Revolution, not only surrendered in favour of the man whose superior pictorial genius he recognised, but supplied him freely with the books he had accumulated for the enterprise. His interest in the work was unfortunately so great as to induce him to borrow the MS. of the first volume, completed in the early spring of 1835, and his business habits so defective as to permit him to leave it lying about when read, so that, as appears from the received accounts, it was mistaken by the servant for waste paper; certainly it was destroyed; and Mill came to Cheyne Row to announce the fact in such a desperate state of mind that Carlyle's first anxiety seems to have been to console his friend. According to Mrs. Carlyle, as reported by Froude, "the first words her hus-

band uttered as the door closed were, 'Well, Mill, poor fellow, is terribly cut up; we must endeavour to hide from him how very serious this business is to us.' This trait of magnanimity under the first blow of a disaster which seemed to cancel the work of years¹ should be set against his nearly contemporaneous criticisms of Coleridge, Lamb, Wordsworth, Sydney Smith, Macaulay, etc.

Mill sent a cheque of £200 as "the slightest external compensation" for the loss, and only, by urgent entreaty, procured the acceptance of half the sum. Carlyle here, as in every real emergency, bracing his resolve by courageous words, as "never tine heart or get provoked heart," set himself to re-write the volume with an energy that recalls that of Scott rebuilding his ruined estate; but the work was at first so "wretched" that it had to be laid aside for a season, during which the author wisely took a restorative bath of comparatively commonplace novels. The re-writing of the first volume was completed in September, 1835; the whole book in January, 1837. The mood in which it was written throws a light on the excellences as on the defects of the history. The *Reminiscences* again record the gloom and defiance of "Thomas the Doubter" walking through the London streets "with a feeling similar to Satan's stepping the burning marl," and scowling at the equipages about Hyde Park corner, sternly thinking, "Yes, and perhaps none of you could do what I am at. I shall finish this book, throw it at your feet, buy a rifle and spade, and withdraw to the Transatlantic wilderness." In an adjacent page he reports himself as having said to his wife:

¹ Carlyle had only been writing the volume for five months; but he was preparing for it during much of his life at Craigenputtock.

What they will do with this book none knows, my lass; but they have not had for two hundred years any book that came more truly from a man's very heart, and so let them trample it under foot and hoof as they see best. . . . "They cannot trample that," she would cheerily answer.

This passage points at once to the secret of the writer's spell and the limits of his lasting power. His works were written seldom with perfect fairness, never with the dry light required for a clear presentation of the truth; they have all "an infusion from the will and the affections;" but they were all written with a whole sincerity and utter fervour; they rose from his hot heart, and rushed through the air "like rockets driv' by their own burning." Consequently his readers confess that he has never forgot the Horatian maxim—

Si vis me flere dolendum est,
Primum ipsi tibi.

About this time Carlyle writes, "My friends think I have found the art of living upon nothing," and there must, despite of Mill's contribution, have been "bitter thrift" in Cheyne Row during the years 1835-1837. He struggled through the unremunerative interval of waiting for the sale of a great work by help of fees derived from his essays on the *Diamond Necklace* (which, after being refused by the *Foreign Quarterly*, appeared in *Fraser*, 1837), that on *Mirabeau* in the *Westminster*, and in the following year, for the same periodical, the article on *Sir Walter Scott*. To the last work, undertaken against the grain, he refers in one of the renewed wails of the year: "O that literature had never been devised. I am scourged back to it by the whip of necessity." The circumstance may account for some of the manifest defects of one of the least satisfactory of Carlyle's longer reviews. Frequent

references in previous letters show that he never appreciated Scott, to whom he refers as a mere Restaurateur.

Meanwhile the appearance of the *French Revolution* had brought the name of its author, then in his forty-third year, for the first time prominently before the public. It attracted the attention of Thackeray, who wrote a generous review in the *Times*, of Southey, Jeffrey, Macaulay, Hallam, and Brougham, who recognised the advent of an equal, if sometimes an adverse power in the world of letters. But, though the book established his reputation, the sale was slow, and for some years the only substantial profits, amounting to about £400, came from America, through the indefatigable activity and good management of Emerson. It is pleasant to note a passage in the interesting volumes of their *Correspondence* which shows that in this instance the benefited understood his financial relation to the benefactor: "A reflection I cannot but make is that, at bottom, this money was all yours; not a penny of it belonged to me by any law except that of helpful friendship. I feel as if I could not examine it without a kind of crime." Others who, at this period, made efforts to assist "the polar Bear" were less fortunate. In several instances good intentions paved the palace of Momus, and in one led a well-meaning man into a notoriously false position. Mr. Basil Montagu being in want of a private secretary offered the post to his former guest, as a temporary makeshift, at a salary of £200, and so brought upon his memory a torrent of contempt. Undeterred by this and similar warnings, the indefatigable philanthropist, Miss Harriet Martineau, who at first conciliated the Carlyles by her affection for "this side of the street," and was afterwards an object of their joint ridicule, conceived the idea of organising a course of lectures to an audience collected by canvass to

hear the strange being from the moors talk for an hour on end about literature, morals, and history. He was then an object of curiosity to those who knew anything about him at all, and lecturing was at that time a lucrative and an honourable employment. The "good Harriet," so called by Cheyne Row in its condescending mood, aided by other kind friends of the Sterling and Mill circles—the former including Frederick Denison Maurice—made so great a success of the enterprise that it was thrice repeated. The *first* course of six lectures on "German Literature," May, 1857, delivered in Wills's Rooms, realised £135; the *second* of twelve, on the "History of European Literature," at 17 Edward Street, Portman Square, had a net result of £300; the *third*, in the same rooms, on "Revolutions," brought £200; the *fourth*, on "Heroes," the same. In closing this course Carlyle appeared for the last time on a public platform until 1866, when he delivered his Inaugural Address as Lord Rector to the students of Edinburgh.

The impression he produced on his unusually select audiences was that of a man of genius, but roughly clad. The more superficial auditors had a new sensation, those who came to stare remained to wonder; the more reflective felt that they had learnt something of value. Carlyle had no inconsiderable share of the oratorical power which he latterly so derided; he was able to speak from a few notes; but there were comments more or less severe on his manner and style. J. Grant, in his *Portraits of Public Characters*, says: "At times he distorts his features as if suddenly seized by some paroxysm of pain . . . he makes mouths; he has a harsh accent and graceless gesticulation." Leigh Hunt, in the *Examiner*, remarks on the lecturer's power of extemporising; but adds that he often touches only the mountain-tops of the subject, and that the impres-

sion left was as if some Puritan had come to life again, liberalised by German philosophy. Bunsen, present at one of the lectures, speaks of the striking and rugged thoughts thrown at people's heads; and Margaret Fullér, afterwards Countess D'Ossoli, referred to his arrogance redeemed by "the grandeur of a Siegfried melting down masses of iron into sunset red." Carlyle's own comments are for the most part slighting. He refers to his lectures as a mixture of prophecy and play-acting, and says that when about to open his course on "Heroes" he felt like a man going to be hanged. To Emerson, April 17th, 1839, he writes:

My lectures come on this day two weeks. O heaven! I cannot "speak;" I can only gasp and writhe and stutter, a spectacle to gods and fashionables—being forced to it by want of money. In five weeks I shall be free, and then—! Shall it be Switzerland? shall it be Scotland? nay, shall it be America and Concord?

Emerson had written about a Boston publication of the *Miscellanies* (first there collected), and was continually urging his friend to emigrate and speak to more appreciative audiences in the States; but the London lectures, which had, with the remittances from over sea, practically saved Carlyle from ruin or from exile, had made him decide "to turn his back to the treacherous Syren"—the temptation to sink into oratory. Mr. Froude's explanation and defence of this decision may be clenched by a reference to the warning his master had received. He had announced himself as a preacher and a prophet, and been taken at his word; but similarly had Edward Irving, who for a season of sun or glamour gathered around him the same crowd and glitter: the end came; twilight and clouds of night. Fashion had flocked to the sermons of the elder Annandale youth—as to the recitatives of the younger—

to see a wild man of the woods and hear him sing; but the novelty gone, they passed on "to Egyptian crocodiles, Iroquois hunters," and left him stranded with "unquiet fire" and "flaccid face." "O foulest Circæan draft," exclaimed his old admirer in his fine dirge, "thou poison of popular applause, madness is in thee and death, thy end is Bedlam and the grave," and with the fixed resolve, "De me fabula non narrabitur," he shut the book on this phase of his life.

The lectures on "Hero-Worship" (a phrase taken from Hume) were published in 1841, and met with considerable success, the name of the writer having then begun to run "like wildfire through London." At the close of the previous year he had published his long pamphlet on *Chartism*, it having proved unsuitable for its original destination as an article in the *Quarterly*. Here first he clearly enunciates, "Might is right"—one of the few strings on which, with all the variations of a political Paganini, he played through life. This tract is on the border line between the old modified Radicalism of *Sartor* and the less modified Conservatism of his later years. In 1840 Carlyle still speaks of himself as a man foiled; but at the close of that year all fear of penury was over, and in the following he was able to refuse a Chair of History at Edinburgh, as later another at St. Andrews. Meanwhile his practical power and genuine zeal for the diffusion of knowledge appeared in his foundation of the London Library, which brought him into more or less close contact with Tennyson, Milman, Forster, Helps, Spedding, Gladstone, and other leaders of the thought and action of the time.

There is little in Carlyle's life at any time that can be called eventful. From first to last it was that of a retired

scholar, a thinker demanding sympathy while craving after solitude, and the frequent inconsistency of the two requirements was the source of much of his unhappiness. Our authorities, for all that we do not see in his published works, are found in his voluminous correspondence, copious autobiographical jottings, and the three volumes of his wife's letters and journal dating from the commencement of the struggle for recognition in London, and extending to the year of her death. Criticism of these remarkable documents, the theme of so much controversy, belongs rather to a life of Mrs. Carlyle; but a few salient facts may here be noted. It appears on the surface that husband and wife had in common several marked peculiarities; on the intellectual side they had not only an extraordinary amount, but the same kind of ability, superhumanly keen insight, and wonderful power of expression, both with tongue and pen; the same intensity of feeling, thoroughness, and courage to look the ugliest truths full in the face; in both, these high qualities were marred by a tendency to attribute the worst motives to almost every one. Their joint contempt for all whom they called "fools," *i.e.* the immense majority of mankind, was a serious drawback to the pleasure of their company. It is indeed obvious that, whether or not it be correct to say that "his nature was the soft one, hers the hard," Mrs. Carlyle was the severer cynic of the two. Much of her writing confirms the impression of those who have heard her talk that no one, not even her husband, was safe from the shafts of her ridicule. Her pride in his genius knew no bounds, and it is improbable that she would have tolerated from any outsider a breath of adverse criticism; but she herself claimed many liberties she would not grant. Clannish almost as Carlyle himself, even her relations are occasionally made to appear

ridiculous. There was nothing in her affections, save her memory of her own father, corresponding to his devotion to his whole family. With equal penetration and greater scorn, she had no share of his underlying reverence. Such limited union as was granted to her married life had only soured the mocking-bird spirit of the child that derided her grandfather's accent on occasion of his bringing her back from a drive by another route to "varry the shane." Carlyle's constant wailings take from him any claim to such powers of endurance as might justify his later attacks on Byron.

But neither had his wife any real reticence. Whenever there were domestic troubles—flitting, repairing, building, etc., on every occasion of clamour or worry, he, with scarce pardonable oblivion of physical delicacy greater than his own, went off, generally to visit distinguished friends, and left behind him the burden and the heat of the day. She performed her unpleasant work and all associated duties with a practical genius that he complimented as "triumphant." She performed them, ungrudgingly perhaps, but never without complaint; her invariable practice was to endure and tell. "Quelle vie," she writes in 1837 to John Sterling, whom she seems to have really liked, "let no woman who values peace of soul ever marry an author;" and again to the same in 1839, "Carlyle had to sit on a jury two days, to the ruin of his whole being, physical, moral, and intellectual," but "one gets to feel a sort of indifference to his growling." Conspicuous exceptions, as in the case of the Shelleys, the Dobells, and the Brownings, have been seen, within or almost within our memories, but as a rule it is a risk for two supersensitive and nervous people to live together; when they are sensitive in opposite ways the alliance is fatal; fortunately the Carlyles

were, in this respect, in the main sympathetic. With most of the household troubles which occupy so exaggerated a space in the letters and journals of both—papering, plastering, painting, deceitful or disorderly domestics—general readers have so little concern that they have reason to resent the number of pages wasted in printing them; but there was one common grievance of wider interest, to which we have before and must here again finally refer, premising that it affected not one period but the whole of their lives, *i.e.* their constant, only half effectual struggle with the modern Hydra-headed monster, the reckless and needless Noises produced or permitted, sometimes increased rather than suppressed by modern civilization. Mrs. Carlyle suffered almost as much as her husband from these murderers of sleep and assassins of repose; on her mainly fell the task of contending with the Cochin-chinas, whose senseless shrieks went “through her like a sword,” of abating a “Der Freischütz of cats,” or a pandemonium of barrel-organs, of suppressing macaws for which Carlyle “could neither think nor live;” now mitigating the scales on a piano, now conjuring away, by threat or bribe, from their neighbours a shoal of “demon fowls;” lastly, of superintending the troops of bricklayers, joiners, iron-hammerers employed, with partial success, to convert the top story of 5 Cheyne Row into a sound-proof room. Her hard-won victories in this field must have agreeably added to the sense of personality to which she resolutely clung. Her assertion, “Instead of boiling up individuals into the species, I would draw a chalk circle round every individuality,” is the essence of much of her mate’s philosophy; but, in the following to Sterling, she somewhat bitterly protests against her own absorption: “In spite of the honestest efforts to annihilate my I—ity or merge it in what the

world doubtless considers my better half, I still find myself a self-subsisting, and, alas, self-seeking me." The ever restive consciousness of being submerged is one of the dominant notes of her journal, the other is the sense of being even within the circle unrecognized. "C. is a domestic wandering Jew. . . . When he is at work I hardly ever see his face from breakfast to dinner." . . . "Poor little wretch that I am, . . . I feel as if I were already half-buried . . . in some intermediate state between the living and the dead. . . . Oh, so lonely!" These are among the *suspiria de profundis* of a life which her husband compared to "a great joyless stoicism," writing to the brother, whom he had proposed as a third on their first home-coming. "Solitude, indeed, is sad as Golgotha, but it is not mad like Bedlam; absence of delirium is possible only for me in solitude;" a sentiment almost literally acted on. In his offering of penitential cypress, referring to his wife's delight in the ultimate success of his work, he says, "She flickered round me like a perpetual radiance." But during their joint lives their numerous visits and journeys were made at separate times or apart. They crossed continually on the roads up and down, but when absent wrote to one another often the most affectionate letters. Their attraction increased, contrary to Kepler's law, in the *direct* ratio of the square of the distance, and when it was stretched beyond the stars the long latent love of the survivor became a worship.

Carlyle's devotion to his own kin, blood of his blood and bone of his bone, did not wait for any death to make itself declared. His veneration for his mother was reciprocated by a confidence and pride in him unruffled from cradle to grave, despite their widening theoretic differences, for with less distinct acknowledgment she seems to

have practically shared his belief, "it matters little what a man holds in comparison with how he holds it." But on his wife's side the family bond was less absolute, and the fact adds a tragic interest to her first great bereavement after the settlement in London. There were many callers—increasing in number and eminence as time went on—at Cheyne Row, but naturally few guests. Among these, Mrs. Carlyle's mother paid, in 1838, her first and last visit, unhappily attended by some unpleasant friction. Grace Welsh (through whom her daughter derived the gipsy vein) had been in early years a beauty and a woman of fashion, endowed with so much natural ability that Carlyle, not altogether predisposed in her favour, confessed she had just missed being a genius; but she was accustomed to have her way, and old Walter of Penfillan confessed to having seen her in fifteen different humours in one evening. Welcomed on her arrival, misunderstandings soon arose. Carlyle himself had to interpose with conciliatory advice to his wife to bear with her mother's humours. One household incident, though often quoted, is too characteristic to be omitted. On occasion of an evening party, Mrs. Welsh, whose ideas of hospitality, if not display, were perhaps larger than those suited for her still struggling hosts, had lighted a show of candles for the entertainment, whereupon the mistress of the house, with an air of authority, carried away two of them, an act which her mother resented with tears. The penitent daughter, in a mood like that which prompted Johnson to stand in the Uttoxeter market-place, left in her will that the candles were to be preserved and lit about her coffin, round which, nearly thirty years later, they were found burning. Carlyle has recorded their last sight of his mother-in-law in a few of his many graphic touches. It was at Dumfries,

in 1841, where she had brought Jane down from Templeland to meet and accompany him back to the south. They parted at the door of the little inn, with deep, suppressed emotion, perhaps overcharged by some presentiment, Mrs. Welsh looking sad but bright, and their last glimpse of her was the feather in her bonnet waving down the way to Lochmaben gate. Towards the close of February, 1842, news came that she had had an apoplectic stroke, and Mrs. Carlyle hurried north, stopping to break the journey at her uncle's house in Liverpool; when there she was so prostrated by the sudden announcement of her mother's death that she was prohibited from going further, and Carlyle came down from London in her stead. On reaching Templeland he found that the funeral had already taken place. He remained six weeks, acting as executor in winding up the estate, which now, by the previous will, devolved on his wife. To her during the interval he wrote a series of pathetic letters. Reading these—which, with others from Haddington in the following years, make an anthology of tenderness and truth, reading them alongside of his angry invectives, with his wife's own accounts of the bilious earthquakes and peevish angers over petty cares; or worse, his ebullitions of jealousy assuming the masque of contempt, we again revert to the biographer who has said almost all that ought to be said of Carlyle, and more: "It seemed as if his soul was divided, like the Dioscuri, as if one part of it was in heaven, and the other in the place opposite heaven. But the misery had its origin in the same sensitiveness of nature which was so tremulously alive to soft and delicate emotion. Men of genius . . . are like the wind-harp which answers to the breath that touches it, now low and sweet, now rising into wild swell or angry scream, as the strings

are swept by some passing gush." This applies completely to men like Burns, Byron, Heine, and Carlyle, less to the Miltons, Shakespeares, and Goethes of the world.

The crisis of bereavement, which promised to bind the husband and wife more closely together, brought to an end a dispute in which for once Mrs. Carlyle had her way. During the eight years over which we have been glancing, Carlyle had been perpetually grumbling at his Chelsea life: the restless spirit, which never found peace on this side of the grave, was constantly goading him with an impulse of flight and change, from land to sea, from shore to hills; anywhere or everywhere, at the time, seemed better than where he was. America and the Teufelsdröckh wanderings abandoned, he reverted to the idea of returning to his own haunts. A letter to Emerson in 1839 best expresses his prevalent feeling:

This foggy Babylon tumbles along as it was wont: and as for my particular case uses me not worse but better than of old. Nay, there are many in it that have a real friendliness for me. . . . The worst is the sore tear and wear of this huge roaring Niagara of things on such a poor, excitable set of nerves as mine. The velocity of all things, of the very word you hear on the streets, is at railway rate; joy itself is unenjoyable, to be avoided like pain; there is no wish one has so pressingly as for quiet. Ah me! I often swear I will be *buried* at least in free, breezy Scotland, out of this insane hubbub . . . if ever the smallest competence of worldly means be mine, I will fly this whirlpool as I would the Lake of Malebolge.

The competence had come, the death of Mrs. Welsh leaving to his wife and himself practically from £200 to £300 a year; why not finally return to the home of their early married life, "in reductâ valle caniculæ," with no noise around it but the trickle of rills and the nibbling of sheep? Craigenputtock was now their own, and within its

"four walls" they would begin a calmer life. Fortunately, Mrs. Carlyle, whose shrewd practical instinct was never at fault, saw through the fallacy, and set herself resolutely against the scheme. Scotland had lost much of its charm for her—a year later she refused an invitation from Mrs. Aitken, saying, "I could do nothing at Scotsbrig or Dumfries but cry from morning to night." She herself had enough of the Hill of the Hawks, and she knew that within a year Carlyle would again be calling it the Devil's Den and lamenting Cheyne Row. He gave way with the protest, "I cannot deliberately mean anything that is harmful to you," and certainly it was well for him.

There is no record of an original writer or artist coming from the north of our island to make his mark in the south, succeeding, and then retracing his steps. Had Carlyle done so, he would probably have passed from the growing recognition of a society he was beginning to find on the whole congenial, to the solitude of intellectual ostracism. Scotland may be breezy, but it is not conspicuously free. Erratic opinions, when duly veiled, are generally allowed; but this concession is of little worth. On the tolerance of those who have no strong belief in anything, Carlyle, thinking possibly of rose-water Hunt and the litterateurs of his tribe, expressed himself with incisive and memorable truth: "It is but doubt and indifference. *Touch the thing they do believe and value, their own self-conceit: they are rattlesnakes then.*"¹ Tolerance for the frank expression of views which clash with the sincere or professed faith of the majority is rare everywhere; in Scotland rarest. Episcopalians, high and broad, were content to condone the grim Calvinism that still infiltrated

¹ The italics are Mr. Froude's.

Carlyle's thoughts, and to smile, at worst, at his idolatry of the iconoclast who said, "the idolater shall die the death." But the reproach of "Pantheism" was for long fatal to his reception across the Tweed.

Towards the close of this period he acknowledged that London was "among improper places" the best for "writing books, after all the one use of living" for him; its inhabitants "greatly the best" he "had ever walked with," and its aristocracy—the Marshalls, Stanleys, Hollands, Russells, Ashburtons, Lansdownes, who held by him through life—its "choicest specimens." Other friendships equally valued he made among the leading authors of the age. Tennyson sought his company, and Connop Thirlwall. Arnold of Rugby wrote in commendation of the *French Revolution* and of *Chartism*. Thackeray admired and reviewed him well. Even in Macaulay, condemned to limbo under the suspicion of having reviewed him ill, he found, when the suspicion was proved unjust, a promise of better things. As early as 1839 Sterling had written an article in the *Westminster*, which gave him intense pleasure; for while contemning it in almost the same words as Byron did, he loved praise equally well. In 1840 he had crossed the Rubicon that lies between aspiration and attainment. The populace might be blind or dumb, the "rattlesnakes"—the "irresponsible indolent reviewers," who, from behind a hedge pelt every wrestler till they found societies for the victor—might still obscurely hiss; but Carlyle was at length safe by the verdict of the "Conscript Fathers."

CHAPTER V.

CHEYNE ROW.

[1842-1853.]

THE bold venture of coming to London with a lean purse, few friends, and little fame had succeeded: but it had been a terrible risk, and the struggle had left scars behind it. To this period of his life we may apply Carlyle's words—made use of by himself at a later date—"The battle was over and we were sore wounded." It is as a maimed knight of modern chivalry, who sounded the *reveille* for an onslaught on the citadels of sham, rather than as a prophet of the future that his name is likely to endure in the history of English thought. He has also a place with Scott amongst the recreators of bygone ages, but he regarded their annals less as pictures than as lesson-books. His aim was that expressed by Tennyson to "steal fire from fountains of the past," but his design was to admonish rather than "to glorify the present." This is the avowed object of the second of his distinctly political works, which, following on the track of the first, *Chartism*, and written in a similar spirit, takes higher artistic rank. *Past and Present*, suggested by a visit to the almshouse of St. Ives and reading the chronicle of *Jocelin de Brakelond*, was undertaken as a duty, while he was mainly engaged on a greater work, the duty he felt laid upon him to say something that should bear directly on the welfare of the peo-

ple, especially of the poor around him. It was an impulse similar to that which inspired *Oliver Twist*, but Carlyle's remedies were widely different from those of Dickens. Not merely more kindness and sympathy but paternal government, supplying work to the idle inmates of the workhouse, and insisting by force if need be on it being done, was his panacea. It had been Abbot Samson's way in his strong government of the Monastery of St. Edmunds, and he resolved, half in parable, half in plain sermon, to recommend it to the Ministers Peel and Russell.

In this mood the book was written off in the first seven weeks of 1843, a *tour de force* comparable to Johnson's writing of *Rasselas*, and published in April. It at once made a mark by the opposition as well as by the approval it excited. Criticism of the work—of its excellences, which are acknowledged, and its defects as manifold—belongs to a review of the author's political philosophy: it is enough here to note that it was remarkable in three ways. *First*, the object of its main attack, *laissez faire*, being a definite one, it was capable of having and had some practical effect. Mr. Froude exaggerates when he says that Carlyle killed the pseudo-science of orthodox political economy; for the fundamental truths in the works of Turgot, Smith, Ricardo, and Mill cannot be killed: but he pointed out that, like Aristotle's leaden rule, the laws of supply and demand must be made to bend; as Mathematics made mechanical must allow for friction, so must Economics leave us a little room for charity. There is ground to believe that the famous Factory Acts owed some of their suggestions to *Past and Present*. Carlyle always speaks respectfully of the future Lord Shaftesbury. "I heard Milnes saying," notes the Lady Sneerwell of real life, "at the Shuttleworths that Lord Ashley was the greatest man

alive: he was the only man that Carlyle praised in his book. I dare say he knew I was overhearing him." But, while supplying arguments and a stimulus to philanthropists, his protests against philanthropy as an adequate solution of the problem of human misery became more pronounced. About the date of the conception of this book we find in the Journal:

Again and again of late I ask myself in whispers, is it the duty of a citizen to paint mere heroisms. . . . Live to make others happy! Yes, surely, at all times, so far as you can. But at bottom that is not the aim of my life. . . . it is mere hypocrisy to call it such, as is continually done nowadays. . . . Avoid cant. Do not think that your life means a mere searching in gutters for fallen figures to wipe and set up.

Past and Present, in the *second* place, is notable as the only considerable consecutive book—unless we also except the *Life of Sterling*—which the author wrote without the accompaniment of wrestlings, agonies, and disgusts. *Thirdly*, though marking a stage in his mental progress, the fusion of the refrains of *Chartism* and *Hero-Worship*, and his first clear breach with Mazzini and with Mill, the book was written as an interlude, when he was in severe travail with his greatest contribution to English history. The last rebuff which Carlyle encountered came, by curious accident, from the *Westminster*, to which Mill had engaged him to contribute an article on "Oliver Cromwell." While this was in preparation, Mill had to leave the country on account of his health, and gave the review in charge of an Aberdonian called Robertson, who wrote to stop the progress of the essay with the message that *he* had decided to undertake the subject himself. Carlyle was angry; but, instead of sullenly throwing the MS.

aside, he set about constructing on its basis a History of the Civil War.

Numerous visits and tours during the following three years, though bringing him into contact with new and interesting personalities, were mainly determined by the resolve to make himself acquainted with the localities of the war; and his knowledge of them has contributed to give colour and reality to the finest battle-pieces in modern English prose. In 1842 with Dr. Arnold he drove from Rugby fifteen miles to Naseby, and the same year, after a brief yachting trip to Belgium—in the notes on which the old Flemish towns stand out as clearly as in Longfellow's verse—he made his pilgrimage to St. Ives and Ely Cathedral, where Oliver two centuries before had called out to the recalcitrant Anglican in the pulpit, "Cease your fooling and come down." In July, 1843, Carlyle made a trip to South Wales; first to visit a worthy devotee called Redmond, and then to Bishop Thirlwall near Carmarthen. "A right solid, simple-hearted, robust man, very strangely swathed," is the visitor's meagre estimate of one of our most classic historians.

On his way back he carefully reconnoitred the field of Worcester. Passing his wife at Liverpool, where she was a guest of her uncle, and leaving her to return to London and brush up Cheyne Row, he walked over Snowdon from Llanberis to Beddgelert, with his brother John. He next proceeded to Scotsbrig, then north to Edinburgh, and then to Dunbar, which he contrived to visit on the 3d of September, an anniversary revived in his pictured page with a glow and force to match which we have to revert to Bacon's account of the sea-fight of the *Revenge*. From Dunbar he returned to Edinburgh, spent some time with his always admired and admiring friend Erskine, of Linlathen,

a Scotch broad churchman of the type of F. D. Maurice and Macleod Campbell, and then went home to set in earnest to the actual writing of his work. He had decided to abandon the design of a History, and to make his book a Biography of Cromwell, interlacing with it the main features and events of the Commonwealth. The difficulties even of this reduced plan were still immense, and his groans at every stage in its progress were "louder and more loud," e.g., "My progress in *Cromwell* is frightful." "A thousand times I regretted that this task was ever taken up." "The most impossible book of all I ever before tried," and at the close, "*Cromwell* I must have written in 1844, but for four years previous it had been a continual toil and misery to me; four years of abstruse toil, obscure speculation, futile wrestling, and misery I used to count it had cost me." The book, issued in 1845, soon went through three editions, and brought the author to the front as the most original historian of his time. Macaulay was his rival, but in different paths of the same field. About this time Mr. Froude became his pupil, and has left an interesting account (iii. 290-300) of his master's influence over the Oxford of those days which would be only spoilt by selections. Oxford, like Athens, ever longing after something new, patronised the Chelsea prophet, and then calmed down to her wonted cynicism. But Froude and Ruskin were, as far as compatible with the strong personality of each, always loyal; and the capacity inborn in both, the power to breathe life into dry records and dead stones had at least an added impulse from their master.

The year 1844 is marked by the publication in the *Foreign Quarterly* of the essay on *Dr. Francia*, and by the death of John Sterling—loved with the love of David for

Jonathan — outside his own family losses, the greatest wrench in Carlyle's life. Sterling's published writings are as inadequate to his reputation as the fragmentary remains of Arthur Hallam; but in friendships, especially unequal friendships, personal fascination counts for more than half, and all are agreed as to the charm in both instances of the inspiring companionships. Archdeacon Hare having given a somewhat coldly correct account of Sterling as a clergyman, Carlyle three years later, in 1851, published his own impressions of his friend as a thinker, sane philanthropist, and devotee of truth, in a work that, written in a three months' fervour, has some claim to rank, though faltering, as prose after verse, with *Adonais*, *In Memoriam*, and Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*.

These years are marked by a series of acts of unobtrusive benevolence, the memory of which has been in some cases accidentally rescued from the oblivion to which the benefactor was willing to have them consigned. Carlyle never boasted of doing a kindness. He was, like Wordsworth, frugal at home beyond necessity, but often as generous in giving as he was ungenerous in judging. His assistance to Thomas Cooper, author of the *Purgatory of Suicides*, his time spent in answering letters of "anxious enquirers"—letters that nine out of ten busy men would have flung into the waste-paper basket—his interest in such works as Samuel Bamford's *Life of a Radical*, and admirable advice to the writer;¹ his instructions to a young

¹ These letters to Bamford, showing a keen interest in the workingmen of whom his correspondent had written, point to the ideal of a sort of Tory Democracy. Carlyle writes: "We want more knowledge about the Lancashire operatives; their miseries and gains, virtues and vices. Winnow what you have to say, and give us wheat free from chaff. Then the rich captains of workers will be willing to

student on the choice of books, and well-timed warning to another against the profession of literature, are sun-rifts in the storm, that show "a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity." The same epoch, however—that of the start of the great writer's almost uninterrupted triumph—brings us in face of an episode singularly delicate and difficult to deal with, but impossible to evade.

Carlyle, now generally recognised in London as having one of the most powerful intellects, and by far the greatest command of language among his contemporaries, was beginning to suffer some of the penalties of renown in being beset by bores and travestied by imitators; but he was also enjoying its rewards. Eminent men of all shades of opinion made his acquaintance; he was a frequent guest of the genial Mæcenæ, an admirer of genius though no mere worshipper of success, R. Monckton Milnes; meeting Hallam, Bunsen, Pusey, etc., at his house in London, and afterwards visiting him at Fryston Hall in Yorkshire. The future Lord Houghton was, among distinguished men of letters and society, the one of whom he spoke with the most unvarying regard. Carlyle corresponded with Peel, whom he set almost on a par with Wellington as worthy of perfect trust, and talked familiarly with Bishop Wilberforce, whom he miraculously credits with holding at heart views much like his own. At a somewhat later date, in the circle of his friends, bound to him by various degrees of intimacy, History was represented by Thirlwall, Grote, and Froude;

listen to you. Brevity and sincerity will succeed. Be brief and select, omit much, give each subject its proper proportionate space; and be exact without caring to round off the edges of what you have to say." Later, he declines Bamford's offer of verses, saying "verse is a bugbear to booksellers at present. These are prosaic, earnest, practical, not singing times."

Poetry by Browning, Henry Taylor, Tennyson, and Clough; Social romance by Kingsley; Biography by James Spedding and John Forster; and Criticism by John Ruskin. His link to the last named was, however, their common distrust of political economy, as shown in *Unto This Last*, rather than any deep artistic sympathy. In Macaulay, a conversationalist more rapid than himself, Carlyle found a rival rather than a companion; but his prejudiced view of physical science was forgotten in his personal affection for Tyndall and in their congenial politics. His society was from the publication of *Cromwell* till near his death increasingly sought after by the aristocracy, several members of which invited him to their country-seats, and bestowed on him all acceptable favours. In this class he came to find other qualities than those referred to in the *Sartor* inscription, and other aims than that of "preserving their game," the ambition to hold the helm of the State in stormy weather, and to play their part among the "captains of industry." In the *Reminiscences* the aristocracy are deliberately voted to be "for continual grace of bearing and of acting, steadfast honour, light address, and cheery stoicism, actually yet the best of English classes." There can be no doubt that his intercourse with this class, as with men of affairs and letters, some of whom were his proximate equals, was a fortunate sequel to the duck-pond of Ecclefechan and the lonely rambles on the Border moors.

Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
Sich ein Character in dem Strom der Welt.

The life of a great capital may be the crown of education, but there is a danger in homage that comes late and then without reserve. Give me neither poverty nor riches,

applies to praise as well as to wealth ; and the sudden transition from comparative neglect to

honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,

is a moral trial passing the strength of all but a few of the "irritable race" of writers. The deference paid to Carlyle made him yet more intolerant of contradiction, and fostered his selfishness, in one instance with the disastrous result of clouding a whole decade of his domestic life. In February, 1839, he speaks of dining—"an eight-o'clock dinner which ruined me for a week"—with "a certain Baring," at whose table in Bath House he again met Bunsen, and was introduced to Lord Mahon. This was the beginning of what, after the death of Sterling, grew into the most intimate friendship of his life. Baring, son of Lord Ashburton of the American treaty so named, and successor to the title on his father's death in 1848, was a man of sterling worth and sound sense, who entered into many of the views of his guest. His wife was by general consent the most brilliant woman of rank in London, whose grace, wit, refinement, and decision of character had made her the acknowledged leader of society. Lady Harriet, by the exercise of some overpowering though purely intellectual spell, made the proudest of men, the modern Diogenes, our later Swift, so much her slave that for twelve years, whenever he could steal a day from his work, he ran at her beck from town to country, from castle to cot; from Addiscombe, her husband's villa in Surrey, to the Grange, her father-in-law's seat in Hampshire; from Loch Luichart and Glen Finnan, where they had Highland shootings, to the Palais Royal. Mr. Froude's comment in his introduction to the *Journal* is substantially as follows: Lady Harriet Baring or Ashburton was the centre of a planetary system

in which every distinguished public man of genuine worth then revolved. Carlyle was naturally the chief among them, and he was perhaps at one time ambitious of himself taking some part in public affairs, and saw the advantage of this stepping-stone to enable him to do something more for the world, as Byron said, than write books for it. But the idea of entering Parliament, which seems to have once suggested itself to him in 1849, was too vague and transient to have ever influenced his conduct. It is more correct to say that he was flattered by a sympathy not too thorough to be tame, pleased by adulation never gross, charmed by the same graces that charmed the rest, and finally fascinated by a sort of hypnotism. The irritation which this strange alliance produced in the mind of the mistress of Cheyne Row is no matter of surprise. Pride and affection together had made her bear with all her husband's humours, and share with him all the toils of the struggle from obscurity. He had emerged, and she was still half content to be systematically set aside for his books, the inanimate rivals on which he was building a fame she had some claim to share. But her fiery spirit was not yet tamed into submitting to be sacrificed to an animate rival, or passively permitting the usurpation of companionship grudged to herself by another woman, whom she could not enjoy the luxury of despising. Lady Harriet's superiority in *finesse* and geniality, as well as advantages of station, were aggravations of the injury, and this with a singular want of tact Carlyle further aggravated when he insisted on his wife accepting the invitations of his hostess. These visits, always against the grain, were rendered more irritating from a half-conscious antagonism between the chief female actors in the tragi-comedy ; the one sometimes innocently unobservant of the wants of her guest, the other turning every acciden-

tal neglect into a slight, and receiving every jest as an affront. Carlyle's "Gloriana" was to the mind of his wife a "heathen goddess," while Mrs. Carlyle, with reference to her favourite dog "Nero," was in her turn nicknamed Agrippina.

In midsummer of 1846, after an enforced sojourn at Addiscombe in worse than her usual health, she returned to Chelsea with "her mind all churned to froth," opened it to her husband with such plainness that "there was a violent scene;" she left the house in a mood like that of the first Mrs. Milton, and took refuge with her friends the Paulets at Seaforth, near Liverpool, uncertain whether or not she would return. There were only two persons from whom it would seem natural for her at such a crisis to ask advice; one was Geraldine Jewsbury, a young Manchester lady, authoress of a well-known novel, *The Half-Sisters*, from the beginning of their acquaintance in 1841 till the close in 1866 her most intimate associate and chosen confidant, who, we are told, "knew all" her secrets;¹ the other was the inspired Italian, pure patriot and Stoic moralist, Joseph Mazzini. To him she wrote twice—once apparently before leaving London, and again from Seaforth. His letters in reply, tenderly sympathetic and yet rigidly insistent on the duty of forbearance and endurance, availed to avert the threatened catastrophe; but there are sentences which show how bitter the complaints must have been.

It is only you who can teach yourself that, whatever the *present* may be, you must front it with dignity. . . . I could only point out to you the fulfilment of duties which can make life—not happy—

¹ Carlyle often speaks, sometimes slightly, of Miss Jewsbury, as a sensational novelist and admirer of George Sand, but he appreciated her genuine worth.

what can? but earnest, sacred, and resigned. . . . I am carrying a burden even heavier than you, and have undergone even bitterer deceptions. Your life proves an empty thing, you say. Empty! Do not blaspheme. Have you never done good? Have you never loved? . . . Pain and joy, deception and fulfilled hopes are just the rain and the sunshine that must meet the traveller on his way. Bless the Almighty if He has thought proper to send the latter to you. . . . Wrap your cloak round you against the first, but do not think a single moment that the one or the other have anything to do with the *end* of the journey.

Carlyle's first letter after the rupture is a mixture of reproach and affection. "We never parted before in such a manner; and all for literally nothing. . . . Adieu, dearest, for that is, and, if madness prevail not, may forever be, your authentic title;" and another, enclosing the birthday present which he had never omitted since her mother's death, softened his wife's resentment, and the storm blew over for a time. But while the cause remained there was in the house at best a surface tranquillity, at worst an undertone of misery which finds voice in Mrs. Carlyle's diary from October, 1855, to May, 1856, not merely covered with "black spider webs," but steeped in gall, the publication of which has made so much debate. It is like a page from *Othello* reversed. A few sentences condense the refrain of the lament. "Charles Buller said of the Duchess de Praslin, 'What could a poor fellow do with a wife that kept a journal but murder her?'" "That eternal Bath House! I wonder how many thousand miles Mr. C. has walked between here and there?" "Being an only child, I never wished to sew men's trousers—no, never!

"I gin to think I've sold myself
For very little cas."

"To-day I called on my lady: she was perfectly civil, for a wonder." "Edward Irving! The past is past and gone is gone—

"O waly, waly, love is bonnie,
A little while when it is new."

Quotations which, laid alongside the records of the writer's visit to the people at Haddington, "who seem all to grow so good and kind as they grow old," and to the graves in the church-yard there, are infinitely pathetic. The letters which follow are in the same strain, *e.g.* to Carlyle when visiting his sister at the Gill, "I never forget kindness, nor, alas, unkindness either:" to Luichart, "I don't believe thee, wishing yourself at home. . . . You don't, as weakly amiable people do, sacrifice yourself for the pleasure of others;" to Mrs. Russell at Thornhill, "My London doctor's prescription is that I should be kept always happy and tranquil (! ! !)"

In the summer of 1856 Lady Ashburton gave a real ground for offence in allowing both the Carlyles, on their way north with her, to take a seat in an ordinary railway carriage, beside her maid, while she herself travelled in a special saloon. Partly, perhaps in consequence, Mrs. Carlyle soon went to visit her cousins in Fifeshire, and afterwards refused to accompany her ladyship on the way back. This resulted in another quarrel with her husband, who had issued the command from Luichart—but it was their last on the subject, for Gloriana died on the 4th of the following May, 1857, at Paris: "The most queen-like woman I had ever known or seen, by nature and by culture *facile princeps* she, I think, of all great ladies I have ever seen." This brought to a close an episode in which there were faults on both sides, gravely punished: the in-

cidents of its course and the manner in which they were received show, among other things, that railing at the name of "Happiness" does little or nothing to reconcile people to the want of the reality. In 1858 Lord Ashburton married again—a Miss Stuart Mackenzie, who became the attached friends of the Carlyles, and remained on terms of unruffled intimacy with both till the end: she survived her husband, who died in 1864, leaving a legacy of £2000 to the household at Cheyne Row. *Sic transit.*

From this date we must turn back over nearly twenty years to retrace the main steps of the great author's career. Much of the interval was devoted to innumerable visits, in acceptance of endless hospitalities, or in paying his annual devotions to Annandale—calls on his time which kept him rushing from place to place like a comet. Two facts are notable about those expeditions: they rarely seemed to give him much pleasure, even at Scotsbrig he complained of sleepless nights and farm noises; and he was hardly ever accompanied by his wife. She, too, was constantly running north to her own kindred in Liverpool or Scotland, but their paths did not run parallel, they almost always intersected, so that when the one was on the way north the other was homeward bound, to look out alone on "a horizon of zero." Only a few of these visits are worth recording as of general interest. Most of them were paid, a few received. In the autumn of 1846, Margaret Fuller, sent from Emerson, called at Cheyne Row, and recorded her impression of the master as "in a very sweet humour, full of wit and pathos, without being overbearing," adding that she was "carried away by the rich flow of his discourse;" and that "the hearty, noble earnestness of his personal bearing brought back the charm of his writing before she wearied of it." A later visitor,

Miss Martineau, his old helper in days of struggle, was now thus esteemed: "Broken into utter wearisomeness, a mind reduced to these three elements—imbecility, dogmatism, and unlimited hope. I never in my life was more heartily bored with any creature!" In 1847 there followed the last English glimpse of Jeffrey and the last of Dr. Chalmers, who was full of enthusiasm about *Cromwell*; then a visit to the Brights, John and Jacob, at Rochdale: with the former he had "a paltry speaking match" on topics described as "shallow, totally worthless to me," the latter he liked, recognising in him a culture and delicacy rare with so much strength of will and independence of thought. Later came a second visit from Emerson, then on a lecturing tour to England, gathering impressions revived in his *English Traits*. "His doctrines are too airy and thin," wrote Carlyle, "for the solid, practical heads of the Lancashire region. We had immense talkings with him here, but found that he did not give as much to chew the cud upon. He is a pure-minded man, but I think his talent is not quite so high as I had anticipated." They had an interesting walk to Stonehenge together, and Carlyle attended one of his friend's lectures, but with modified approval, finding this serene "spiritual son" of his own rather "gone into philanthropy and moonshine." Emerson's notes of this date, on the other hand, mark his emancipation from mere discipleship. "Carlyle had all the kleinstädtlicher traits of an islander and a Scotsman, and reprimanded with severity the rebellious instincts of the native of a vast continent. . . . In him, as in Byron, one is more struck with the rhetoric than with the matter. . . . There is more character than intellect in every sentence, therein strangely resembling Samuel Johnson." The same year Carlyle perpetrated one of his worst criticisms, that on Keats:

The kind of man he was gets ever more horrible to me. Force of hunger for pleasure of every kind, and want of all other force. . . . Such a structure of soul, it would once have been very evident, was a chosen "Vessel of Hell."

And in the next an ungenerously contemptuous reference to Macaulay's *History* :

The most popular ever written. Fourth edition already, within perhaps four months. Book to which four hundred editions could not add any value, there being no depth of sense in it at all, and a very great quantity of rhetorical wind.

Landor, on the other hand, whom he visited later at Bath, he appreciated, being "much taken with the gigantesque, explosive but essentially chivalrous and almost heroic old man."¹ He was now at ease about the sale of his books, having, *inter alia*, received £600 for a new edition of the *French Revolution* and the *Miscellanies*. His Journal is full of plans for new work on democracy, organisation of labour, and education, and his letters of the period to Thomas Erskine and others are largely devoted to politics.

In 1846 he spent the first week of September in Ireland, crossing from Ardrossan to Belfast, and then driving to Drogheda, and by rail to Dublin, where in Conciliation

¹ This is one of the few instances in which further knowledge led to a change for the better in Carlyle's judgment. In a letter to Emerson, 1840, he speaks disparagingly of Landor as "a wild man, whom no extent of culture had been able to tame! His intellectual faculty seemed to me to be weak in proportion to his violence of temper: the judgment he gives about anything is more apt to be wrong than right—as the inward whirlwind shows him this side or the other of the object: and *sides* of an object are all that he sees." *De te fabula*. Emerson answers defending Landor, and indicating points of likeness between him and Carlyle.

Hall he saw O'Connell for the first time since a casual glimpse at a radical meeting arranged by Charles Buller—a meeting to which he had gone out of curiosity in 1834. O'Connell was always an object of Carlyle's detestation, and on this occasion he does not mince his words.

Chief quack of the then world . . . first time I had ever heard the lying scoundrel speak. . . . Demosthenes of blarney. . . . The big beggar-man who had £15,000 a year, and, *proh pudor!* the favour of English ministers instead of the pillory.

At Dundrum he met by invitation Carleton the novelist, with Mitchell and Gavan Duffy,¹ the young Ireland leaders whom he seems personally to have liked, but he told Mitchell that he would probably be hanged, and said during a drive about some flourishing and fertile fields of the Pale, "Ah! Duffy, there you see the hoof of the bloody Saxon." He returned from Kingston to Liverpool on the 10th, and so closed his short and unsatisfactory trip. Three years later, July to August 6th, 1849, he paid a longer and final visit to the "ragged commonweal" or "common woe," as Raleigh called it, landing at Dublin, and after some days there passing on to Kildare, Kilkenny, Lismore, Waterford, beautiful Killarney and its

¹ Sir C. Gavan Duffy, in the "Conversations and Correspondence," now being published in the *Contemporary Review*, naturally emphasises Carlyle's politer, more genial side, and prints several expressions of sympathy with the "Tenant Agitations;" but his demur to the *Reminiscences of My Irish Journey* being accepted as an accurate account of the writer's real sentiments is of little avail in face of the letters to Emerson, more strongly accentuating the same view, e.g., "Bothered almost to madness with Irish balderdash. . . . 'Blacklead these two million idle beggars,' I sometimes advised, 'and sell them in Brazil as niggers!'—perhaps Parliament on sweet constraint will allow you to advance them to be niggers!"

beggar hordes, and then to Limerick, Clare, Castlebar, where he met W. E. Foster, whose acquaintance he had made two years earlier at Matlock. At Gweedore in Donegal he stayed with Lord George Hill, whom he respected, though persuaded that he was on the wrong road to Reform by Philanthropy in a country where it had never worked; and then on to half Scotch Derry. There, August 6th, he made an emphatic after-breakfast speech to a half sympathetic audience; the gist of it being that the remedy for Ireland was not "emancipation" or "liberty," but to "cease following the devil, as it had been doing for two centuries." The same afternoon he escaped on board a Glasgow steamer, and landed safe at 2 A.M. on the morning of the 7th. The notes of the tour, set down on his return to Chelsea and republished in 1882, having only the literary merit of the vigorous descriptive touches inseparable from the author's lightest writing; otherwise they are mere rough and tumble jottings, with no consecutive meaning, of a rapid hawk's-eye view of the four provinces.

But Carlyle never departed from the views they set forth, that Ireland is in the main a country of idle semi-savages, whose staple trade is begging, whose practice is to lie, unfit not only for self-government but for what is commonly called constitutional government, whose ragged people must be coerced, by the methods of Raleigh, of Spenser, and of Cromwell, into reasonable industry and respect for law. At Westport, where "human swinery has reached its acme," he finds "30,000 paupers in a population of 60,000, and 34,000 kindred hulks on out-door relief, lifting each an ounce of mould with a shovel, while 5000 lads are pretending to break stones," and exclaims, "Can it be a charity to keep men alive on these terms? In face

of all the twaddle of the earth, shoot a man rather than train him (with heavy expense to his neighbours) to be a deceptive human swine." Superficial travellers generally praise the Irish. Carlyle had not been long in their country when he formulated his idea of the Home Rule that seemed to him most for their good.

Kildare Railway: big blockhead sitting with his dirty feet on seat opposite, not stirring them for one who wanted to sit there. "One thing we're all agreed on," said he; "we're very ill-governed: Whig, Tory, Radical, Repealer, all, all admit we're very ill-governed!" I thought to myself, "Yes, indeed; you govern yourself! He that would govern you well would probably surprise you much, my friend—laying a hearty horsewhip over that back of yours."

And a little later at Castlebar he declares, "Society here would have to eat itself and end by cannibalism in a week, if it were not held up by the rest of our Empire standing afoot." These passages are written in the spirit which inspired his paper on "The Nigger Question" and the aggressive series of assaults to which it belongs, on what he regarded as the most prominent quackeries, shams, and pretence philanthropies of the day. His own account of the reception of this work is characteristic:

In 1849, after an interval of deep and gloom and bottomless dubitation came *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, which unpleasantly astonished everybody, set the world upon the strangest suppositions—"Carlyle got deep into whisky," said some—ruined my reputation according to the friendliest voices, and in effect divided me altogether from the mob of "Progress-of-the-species" and other vulgar; but were a great relief to my own conscience as a faithful citizen, and have been ever since.

These pamphlets alienated Mazzini and Mill, and provoked the assault of the newspapers; which, by the author's

confession, did something to arrest and restrict the sale. Nor was this indignation wholly unnatural. Once in his life, on occasion of his being called to serve at a jury trial, Carlyle, with remarkable adroitness, coaxed a recalcitrant juryman into acquiescence with the majority; but coaxing as a rule was not his way. When he found himself in front of what he deemed to be a falsehood his wont was to fly in its face and tear it to pieces. His satire was not like that of Horace, who taught his readers *ridendo dicere verum*, it was rather that of the elder Lucilius or the later Juvenal; not that of Chaucer, who wrote:

That patience is a virtue high is plain,
Because it conquers, as the clerks explain,
Things that rude valour never could attain,

but that of *The Lye*, attributed to Raleigh, or Swift's *Gulliver*, or the Letters of Junius. The method of direct denunciation has advantages: it cannot be mistaken, nor, if strong enough, ignored; but it must lay its account with consequences, and Carlyle in this instance found them so serious that he was threatened at the height of his fame with dethronement. Men said he had lost his head, gone back to the everlasting "No," and mistaken swearing all round for political philosophy. The ultimate value attached to the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* must depend to a large extent on the view of the critic. It is now, however, generally admitted on the one hand that they served in some degree to counteract the rashness of Philanthropy; on the other, that their effect was marred by more than the writer's usual faults of exaggeration. It is needless to refer the temper they display to the troubles then gathering about his domestic life. A better explanation is to be found in the public events of the time.

The two years previous to their appearance were the Revolution years, during which the European world seemed to be turned upsidedown. The French had thrown out their *bourgeois* king, Louis Philippe—"the old scoundrel," as Carlyle called him—and established their second Republic. Italy, Hungary, and half Germany were in revolt against the old authorities; the Irish joined in the chorus, and the Chartist monster petition was being carted to Parliament. Upheaval was the order of the day, kings became exiles and exiles kings, dynasties and creeds were being subverted, and empires seemed rocking as on the surface of an earthquake. They were years of great aspirations, with beliefs in all manner of swift regeneration:

Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo,

all varieties of doctrinaire idealisms. Mazzini failed at Rome, Kossuth at Pesth; the riots of Berlin resulted in the restoration of the old dull bureaucratic regime; Smith O'Brien's bluster exploded in a cabbage garden; the Railway Bubble burst in the fall of the bloated king Hudson, and the Chartism of the time evaporated in smoke. The old sham gods, with Buonaparte of the stuffed eagle in front, came back; because, concluded Carlyle, there was no man in the front of the new movement strong enough to guide it; because its figure-heads were futile sentimentalists, insurgents who could not win. The reaction produced by their failure had somewhat the same effect on his mind that the older French Revolution had on that of Burke: he was driven back to a greater degree than Mr. Froude allows on practical conservatism and on the negations of which the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* are the expression. To this series of *pronunciamentos* of political scorp-

ticism he meant to add another, of which he often talks under the name of "Exodus from Houndsditch," boldly stating and setting forth the grounds of his now complete divergence from all forms of what either in England or Europe generally could be called the Orthodox faith in Religion. He was, we are told, withheld from this by the feeling that the teaching even of the priests he saw and derided in Belgium or in Galway was better than the atheistic materialism which he associated with the dominion of mere physical science. He may have felt he had nothing, definite enough to be understood by the people, to substitute for what he proposed to destroy; and he may have had a thought of the reception of such a work at Scotsbrig. Much of the *Life of Sterling*, however, is somewhat less directly occupied with the same question, and though gentler in tone it excited almost as much clamour as the *Pamphlets*, especially in the north. The book, says Carlyle himself, was "utterly revolting to the religious people in particular (to my surprise rather than otherwise). 'Doesn't believe in us either!' Not he for certain; can't, if you will know." During the same year his almost morbid dislike of materialism found vent in denunciations of the "Crystal Palace" Exhibition of Industry; though for its main promoter, Prince Albert, he subsequently entertained and expressed a sincere respect.

In the summer of 1851 the Carlyles went together to Malvern, where they met Tennyson (whose good-nature had been proof against some slighting remarks on his verses), Sydney Dobell, then in the fame of his "Roman," and other celebrities. They tried the "Water Cure," under the superintendence of Dr. Gully, who received and treated them as guests; but they derived little good from the process. "I found," says Carlyle, "water taken as

medicine to be the most destructive drug I had ever tried." Proceeding northward, he spent three weeks with his mother, then in her eighty-fourth year and at last growing feeble; a quiet time only disturbed by indignation at "one ass whom I heard the bray of in some Glasgow newspaper," comparing "our grand hater of shams," to Father Gavazzi. His stay was shortened by a summons to spend a few days with the Ashburtons at Paris on their return from Switzerland. Though bound by a promise to respond to the call, Carlyle did not much relish it. Travelling abroad was always a burden to him, and it was aggravated in this case by his very limited command of the language for conversational purposes. Fortunately, on reaching London he found that the poet Browning and his wife, whose acquaintance he had made ten years before, were about to start for the same destination, and he prevailed upon them, though somewhat reluctant, to take charge of him.¹ The companionship was, therefore, not accidental, and it was of great service. "Carlyle," according to Mrs. Browning's biographer, "would have been miserable without Browning, who made all the arrangements for the party, passed luggage through the customs, saw to passports, fought the battles of all the stations, and afterwards acted as guide through the streets of the great city." By a curious irony, two verse-makers and admirers of George Sand made it possible for the would-be man of action to find his way. The poetess, recalling the trip afterwards, wrote that she liked the prophet more than she expected, finding his "bitterness only melancholy, and his scorn sensibility." Browning himself continued through life to regard Carlyle with "affectionate reverence." "He never

¹ Mrs. Sutherland Orr's *Life of Robert Browning*.

ceased," says Mrs. Orr, "to defend him against the charge of unkindness to his wife, or to believe that, in the matter of their domestic unhappiness, she was the more responsible of the two. . . . He always thought her a hard, unlovable woman, and I believe little liking was lost between them. . . . Yet Carlyle never rendered him that service—easy as it appears—which one man of letters most justly values from another, that of proclaiming the admiration which he privately professed for his work." The party started September 24th, and reached Dieppe by Newhaven, after a rough passage, the effects of which on some fellow-travellers more unfortunate than himself Carlyle describes in a series of recently-discovered jottings¹ made on his return, October 2d, to Chelsea. On September 25th they reached Paris. Carlyle joined the Ashburtons at Meuricé's Hotel: there dined, went in the evening to the Theatre Français, cursed the play, and commented unpleasantly on General Changarnier sitting in the stalls.

During the next few days he met many of the celebrities of the time, and caricatured, after his fashion, their personal appearance, talk, and manner. These criticisms are for the most part of little value. The writer had in some of his essays shown almost as much capacity of understanding the great Frenchmen of the last century as was compatible with his Puritan vein; but as regards French literature since the Revolution he was either ignorant or alien. What light could be thrown on that interesting era by a man who could only say of the authors of *La Comédie Humaine* and *Consuelo* that they were ministers in a Phallus worship? Carlyle seems to have seen most of

¹ Partially reproduced, *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 9th, 1890, with illustrative connecting comments.

Thiers, whom he treats with good-natured condescension, but little insight: "round fat body, tapering like a nine-pin into small fat feet, placidly sharp fat face, puckered eyeward . . . a frank, sociable kind of creature, who has absolutely no malignity towards any one, and is not the least troubled with self-seekings." Thiers talked with contempt of Michelet, and Carlyle, unconscious of the numerous affinities between that historian of genius and himself, half assented. Prosper Mérimée,¹ on the other hand, incensed him by some freaks of criticism, whether in badinage or earnest—probably the former. "Jean Paul," he said, getting on the theme of German literature, "was a hollow fool of the first magnitude," and Goethe was "insignificant, unintelligible, a paltry kind of Scribe manqué." "I could stand no more of it, but lighted a cigar and adjourned to the street. 'You impertinent, blasphemous blockhead!' this was sticking in my throat; better to retire without bringing it out." Of Guizot he writes, "Tartuffe, gaunt, hollow, resting on the everlasting 'No' with a haggard consciousness that it ought to be the everlasting 'Yea.'" "To me an extremely detestable kind of man." Carlyle missed General Cavaignac, "of all Frenchmen the one" he "cared to see." In the streets of Paris he found no one who could properly be called a gentleman. "The truly ingenious and strong men of France are here (*i.e.* among the industrial classes) making money, while the politician, literary, etc., etc. class is mere play-actorism." His summary before leaving at the close of a week, rather misspent, is: "Articulate-speaking France was altogether

¹ The two men were mutually antagonistic; Mérimée tried to read the *French Revolution*, but flung the book aside in weariness or disdain.

without beauty or meaning to me in my then diseased mood; but I saw traces of the inarticulate . . . much worthier."

Back in London, he sent Mrs. Carlyle to the Grange (distinguishing himself, in an interval of study at home, by washing the back area flags with his own hands), and there joined her till the close of the year. During the early part of the next he was absorbed in reading and planning work. Then came an unusually tranquil visit to Thomas Erskine, of Linlathen, during which he had only to complain that the servants were often obliged to run out of the room to hide their laughter at his humorous bursts. At the close of August, 1852, he embarked on board a Leith steamer bound for Rotterdam, on his first trip to Germany. Home once more, in October, he found chaos come, and seas of paint overwhelming everything; "went to the Grange, and back in time to witness from Bath House the funeral, November 18th, of the great Duke," remarking, "The one true man of official men in England, or that I know of in Europe, concludes his long course. . . . Tennyson's verses are naught. Silence alone is respectable on such an occasion." In March, again at the Grange, he met the Italian minister Azeglio, and when this statesman disparaged Mazzini—a thing only permitted by Carlyle to himself—he retorted with the remark, "*Mon-sieur, vous ne le connaissez pas du tout, du tout.*" At Chelsea, on his return, the fowl tragic-comedy reached a crisis, "the unprotected male" declaring that he would shoot them or poison them. "A man is not a Chatham nor a Wallenstein; but a man has work, too, which the Powers would not quite wish to have suppressed by two and sixpence worth of bantams. . . . They must either withdraw or die." Ultimately his mother-wife came to the

rescue of her "babe of genius;" the cocks were bought off, and in the long-talked-of sound-proof room the last considerable work of his life, though painfully, proceeded. Meanwhile "brother John" had married, and Mrs. Carlyle went to visit the couple at Moffat. While there bad tidings came from Scotsbrig, and she dutifully hurried off to nurse her mother-in-law through an attack from which the strong old woman temporarily rallied. But the final stroke could not be long delayed. When Carlyle was paying his winter visit to the Grange in December, news came that his mother was worse, and her recovery despaired of; and, by consent of his hostess, he hurried off to Scotsbrig; "mournful leave given me by the Lady A., mournful encouragement to be speedy, not dilatory," and arrived in time to hear her last words. "Here is Tom come to bid you good-night, mother," said John. "As I turned to go, she said, 'I'm muckle obleeged to you.'" She spoke no more, but passed from sleep after sleep of coma to that of death, on Sunday, Christmas Day, 1853. "We can only have one mother," exclaimed Byron on a like event—the solemn close of many storms. But between Margaret Carlyle and the son of whom she was so proud there had never been a shadow. "If," writes Mr. Froude, "she gloried in his fame and greatness, he gloried more in being her son, and while she lived she, and she only, stood between him and the loneliness of which he so often and so passionately complained."

Of all Carlyle's letters none are more tenderly beautiful than those which he sent to Scotsbrig. The last, written on his fifty-eighth birthday, December 4th, which she probably never read, is one of the finest. The close of their wayfaring together left him solitary; his "soul all hung with black," and, for months to come, everything

around was overshadowed by the thought of his bereavement. In his journal of February 28th, 1854, he tells us that he had on the Sunday before seen a vision of Mainhill in old days, with mother, father, and the rest getting dressed for the meeting-house. "They are gone now, vanished all; their poor bits of thrifty clothes, . . . their pious struggling efforts; their little life, it is all away. It has all melted into the still sea, it was rounded with a sleep." The entry ends, as fitting, with a prayer: "O pious mother! kind, good, brave, and truthful soul as I have ever found, and more than I have elsewhere found in this world. Your poor Tom, long out of his school-days now, has fallen very lonely, very lame and broken in this pilgrimage of his; and you cannot help him or cheer him . . . any more. From your grave in Ecclefechan kirk-yard yonder you bid him trust in God; and that also he will try if he can understand and do."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MINOTAUR.

[1853-1866.]

CARLYLE was now engaged on a work which required, received, and wellnigh exhausted all his strength, resulting in the greatest though the least generally read of all his books. *Cromwell* achieved, he had thrown himself for a season into contemporary politics, condescending even, contrary to his rule, to make casual contributions to the Press; but his temper was too hot for success in that arena, and his letters of the time are full of the feeling that the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* had set the world against him. None of his generous replies to young men asking his advice are more suggestive than that in which he writes from Chelsea (March 9th, 1850):

If my books teach you anything, don't mind in the least whether other people believe it or not; but lay it to heart . . . as a real message left with you, which you must set about fulfilling, whatever others do. . . . And be not surprised that "people have no sympathy with you." That is an accompaniment that will attend you all your days if you mean to live an earnest life.

But he himself, though "ever a fighter," felt that, even for him, it was not good to be alone. He decided there "was no use railing in vain like Timon;" he would go back

again from the present to the past, from the latter days of discord to seek countenance in some great figure of history, under whose ægis he might shelter the advocacy of his views. Looking about for a theme, several crossed his mind. He thought of Ireland, but that was too burning a subject; of William the Conqueror, of Simon de Montfort, the Norsemen, the Cid; but these may have seemed to him too remote. Why, ask patriotic Scotsmen, did he not take up his and their favourite Knox. But Knox's life had been fairly handled by M'Crie, and Carlyle would have found it hard to adjust his treatment of that essentially national "hero" to the "Exodus from Houndsditch." "Luther" might have been an apter theme; but there too it would have been a strain to steer clear of theological controversy, of which he had had enough. Napoleon was at heart too much of a gamin for his taste. Looking over Europe in more recent times, he concluded that the Prussian monarchy had been the main centre of modern stability, and that it had been made so by its virtual creator, Friedrich II., called the Great. Once entertained, the subject seized him as with the eye of Coleridge's mariner, and, in spite of manifold efforts to get free, compelled him, so that he could "not choose but" write on it. Again and again, as the magnitude of the task became manifest, we find him doubting, hesitating, recalcitrating, and yet captive. He began reading Jomini, Preuss, the king's own Memoirs and Despatches, and groaned at the mountains through which he had to dig. "Prussian Friedrich and the Pelion laid on Ossa of Prussian dry-as-dust lay crushing me with the continual question, Dare I try it? Dare I not?" At length, gathering himself together for the effort, he resolved, as before in the case of Cromwell, to visit the scenes of which he was to write. Hence the excursion

to Germany of 1852, during which, with the kindly-offered guidance of Mr. Neuberg, an accomplished German admirer of some fortune resident in London, he made his first direct acquaintance with the country of whose literature he had long been himself the English interpreter. The outlines of the trip may be shortly condensed from the letters written during its progress to his wife and mother. Reaching Rotterdam on September 1st, after a night made sleepless by "noisy nocturnal travellers and the most industrious cocks and clamorous bells" he had ever heard, he sailed up the river to Bonn, where he consulted books, saw "Father Arndt," and encountered some types of the German professoriate, "miserable creatures lost in statistics." There he met Neuberg, and they went together to Rolandseck, to the village of Hunef among the Sieben-Gebirge, and then on to Coblenz. After a detour to Ems, which Carlyle, comminating the gaming-tables, compared to Matlock, and making a pilgrimage to Nassau as the birthplace of William the Silent, they rejoined the Rhine and sailed admiringly up the finest reach of the river. From Mainz the philosopher and his guide went on to Frankfort, paid their respects to Goethe's statue and the garret where *Werther* was written, the Judengasse, "grimmiest section of the Middle Ages," and the Römer—election hall of the old Kaisers; then to Homburg, where they saw an old Russian countess playing "gowpanfuls of gold pieces every stake," and left after no long stay, Carlyle, in a letter to Scotsbrig, pronouncing the fashionable Badeort to be the "rallying-place of such a set of empty blackguards as are not to be found elsewhere in the world." We find him next at Marburg, where he visited the castle of Philip of Hesse. Passing through Cassel, he went to Eisenach, and visited the neighbouring Wartburg, where

he kissed the old oaken table on which the Bible was made an open book for the German race, and noted the hole in the plaster where the ink-stand had been thrown at the devil and his noises: an incident to which eloquent reference is made in the lectures on "Heroes." Hence they drove to Gotha, and lodged in Napoleon's room after Leipzig. Then by Erfurt, with more Luther memories, they took rail to Weimar, explored the houses of Goethe and of Schiller, and dined by invitation with the Augustenburgs; the Grand Duchess, with sons and daughters, conversing in a Babylonish dialect, a melange of French, English, and German. The next stage seems to have been Leipzig, then in a bustle with the Fair. "However," says Carlyle, "we got a book or two, drank a glass of wine in Auerbach's keller, and at last got off safe to the comparative quiet of Dresden." He ignores the picture-galleries; and makes a bare reference to the palaces from which they steamed up the Elbe to the heart of Saxon Switzerland. There he surveyed Lobositz, first battle-field of the Seven Years' War, and rested at the romantic mountain watering-place of Töplitz. "He seems," wrote Mrs. Carlyle, "to be getting very successfully through his travels, thanks to the patience and helpfulness of Neuberg. He makes in every letter frightful *misereres* over his sleeping accommodations; but he cannot conceal that he is really pretty well." The writer's own *misereres* are as doleful and nearly as frequent; but she was really in much worse health. From Töplitz the companions proceeded in weary stillwagens to Zittau in Lusatia, and so on to

Herrnhut, the primitive city of the Moravian brethren; a place not bigger than Annan, but beautiful, pure, and quiet beyond any town on the earth, I dare say; and, indeed, more like a saintly dream of ideal Calvinism made real than a town of stone and lime.

Onward by "dreary, moory Frankfurt" on the Oder, whence they reconnoitred "the field of Kunersdorf, a scraggy village where Fritz received his worst defeat," they reached the Prussian capital on the last evening of the month. From the British Hotel, Unter den Linden, we have, October 1st:

I am dead stupid; my heart nearly choked out of me, and my head churned to pieces. . . . Berlin is loud almost as London, but in no other way great . . . about the size of Liverpool, and more like Glasgow.

They spent a week there (sight-seeing being made easier by an introduction from Lady Ashburton to the Ambassador), discovering at length an excellent portrait of Fritz, meeting Tieck, Cornelius, Rauch, Preuss, etc., and then got quickly back to London by way of Hanover, Cologne, and Ostend. Carlyle's travels are always interesting, and would be more so without the tiresome, because ever the same, complaints. Six years later (1858) he made his second expedition to Germany, in the company of two friends, a Mr. Foxton—who is made a butt—and the faithful Neuberg. Of this journey, undertaken with a more exclusively business purpose, and accomplished with greater dispatch, there are fewer notes, the substance of which may be here anticipated. He sailed (August 21st) from Leith to Hamburg, admiring the lower Elbe, and then went out of his way to accept a pressing invitation from the Baron Usedom and his wife to the Isle of Rügen, sometimes called the German Isle of Wight. He went there by Stralsund, liked his hosts and their pleasant place, where for cocks crowing he had doves cooing; but in Putbus, the Richmond of the island, he had to encounter brood sows as well as cochin-chinas. From Rügen he went quickly south by Stettin to Berlin, then to Cüstrin to survey the field of

Zorndorf, with what memorable result readers of *Friedrich* know. His next halt was at Liegnitz, headquarters for exploring the grounds of "Leuthen, the grandest of all the battles," and Molwitz—first of Fritz's fights—of which we hear so much in the *Reminiscences*. His course lay on to Breslau, "a queer old city as ever you heard of, high as Edinburgh or more so," and, by Landshut, through the picturesque villages of the Riesen-Gebirge into Bohemia. There he first put up at Pardubitz in a vile, big inn, for bed a "trough eighteen inches too short, a mattress forced into it which cocked up at both ends"—such as most travellers in remoter Germany at that period have experienced. Carlyle was unfavourably impressed by the Bohemians; and "not one in a hundred of them could understand a word of German. They are liars, thieves, slatterns, a kind of miserable, subter-Irish people—Irish with the addition of ill-nature." He and his friends visited the fields of Chotusitz and Kolin, where they found the "Golden Sun," from which "the last of the Kings" had surveyed the ground, "sunk to be the dirtiest house probably in Europe." Thence he made for Prague, whose picturesque grandeur he could not help extolling. "Here," he writes, enclosing the flower to his wife, "is an authentic wild pink plucked from the battle-field. Give it to some young lady who practises the Battle of Prague on her piano to your satisfaction." On September 15th he dates from Dresden, whence he spent a laborious day over Torgau. Thereafter they sped on, with the usual tribulations, by Hochkirk, Leipzig, Weissenfels, and Rossbach. Hurrying homeward, they were obliged to decline another invitation from the Duchess at Weimar; and, making for Guntershausen, performed the fatiguing journey from there to Aix-la-Chapelle in one day, *i.e.* travelling often in slow trains from 4 A.M.

to 7 P.M., a foolish feat even for the eupeptic. Carlyle visited the cathedral, but has left a very poor account of the impression produced on him by the simple slab sufficiently inscribed "Carolo Magno." "Next morning stand upon the lid of Charlemagne, abominable monks roaring out their idolatrous grand music within sight." By Ostend and Dover he reached home on the 22d. A Yankee scamper trip, one might say, but for the result testifying to the enormous energy of the traveller. "He speaks lightly," says Mr. Froude, "of having seen Kolin, Torgau, etc., etc. No one would guess from reading these short notices that he had mastered the details of every field he visited; not a turn of the ground, not a brook, not a wood . . . had escaped him. . . . There are no mistakes. Military students in Germany are set to learn Frederick's battles in Carlyle's account of them."

During the interval between those tours there are few events of interest in Carlyle's outer, or phases of his inner, life which have not been already noted. The year 1854 found the country ablaze with the excitement of the Crimean War, with which he had as little sympathy as Cobden or Bright or the members of Sturge's deputation. He had no share in the popular enthusiasm for what he regarded as a mere newspaper folly. All his political leaning was on the side of Russia, which, from a safe distance, having no direct acquaintance with the country, he always admired as a seat of strong government, the representative of wise control over barbarous races. Among the worst of these he reckoned the Turk, "a lazy, ugly, sensual, dark fanatic, whom we have now had for 400 years. I would not buy the continuance of him in Europe at the rate of sixpence a century." Carlyle had no more faith in the "Balance of power" than had Byron, who scoffed at it

from another, the Republican, side as "balancing straws on kings' noses instead of wringing them off," *e.g.* :

As to Russian increase of strength, he writes, I would wait till Russia meddled with me before I drew sword to stop his increase of strength. It is the idle population of editors, etc., that has done all this in England. One perceives clearly that ministers go forward in it against their will.

Even our heroisms at Alma—"a terrible, almost horrible operation"—Balaclava, and Inkermann, failed to raise a glow in his mind, though he admitted the force of Tennyson's ringing lines. The alliance with the "scandalous copper captain," elected by the French, as the Jews chose Barabbas—an alliance at which many patriots winced—was to him only an added disgrace. Carlyle's comment on the subsequent visit to Osborne of Victor Hugo's "brigand," and his reception within the pale of legitimate sovereignty was, "Louis Bonaparte has not been shot hitherto. That is the best that can be said." Sedan brought most men round to his mind about Napoleon III. : but his approval of the policy of the Czars remains open to the criticism of M. Lanin. In reference to the next great struggle of the age, Carlyle was in full sympathy with the mass of his countrymen. He was as much enraged by the Sepoy rebellion as were those who blew the ringleaders from the muzzles of guns. "Tongue cannot speak," he exclaims, in the spirit that inspired Millais's picture, before it was amended or spoilt, "the horrors that were done on the English by these mutinous hyænas. Allow hyænas to mutiny and strange things will follow." He never seems to have revolved the question as to the share of his admired Muscovy in instigating the revolt. For the barbarism of the north he had ready apologies, for the savagery of the

south mere execration; and he writes of the Hindoos as he did, both before and afterwards, of the negroes in Jamaica.

Three sympathetic obituary notices of the period expressed his softer side. In April, 1854, John Wilson and Lord Cockburn died at Edinburgh. His estimate of the former is notable as that generally entertained, now that the race of those who came under the personal spell of Christopher North has passed:

We lived apart as in different centuries; though to say the truth I always loved Wilson, he had much nobleness of heart, and many traits of noble genius, but the central tie-beam seemed always wanting; very long ago I perceived in him the most irreconcilable contradictions—Toryism with Sansculottism, Methodism of a sort with total incredulity, etc. . . . Wilson seemed to me always by far the most gifted of our literary men, either then or still: and yet intrinsically he has written nothing that can endure.

Cockburn is referred to in contrast as “perhaps the last genuinely national type of rustic Scotch sense, sincerity, and humour—a wholesome product of Scotch dialect, with plenty of good logic in it.” Later Douglas Jerrold is described as “last of the London wits, I hope the last.” Carlyle’s letters during this period are of minor interest: many refer to visits paid to distinguished friends and humble relatives, with the usual complaints about health, servants, and noises. At Farlingay, where he spent some time with Edward Fitzgerald, translator of *Omar Khayam*, the lowing of cows took the place of cocks crowing. Here and there occurs a criticism or a speculation. That on his dreams is, in the days of “insomnia,” perhaps worth noting (F. iv. 154, 155), *inter alia* he says: “I have an impression that one always dreams, but that only in cases

where the nerves are disturbed by bad health, which produces light, imperfect sleep, do they start into such relief as to force themselves on our waking consciousness." Among posthumously printed documents of Cheyne Row, to this date belongs the humorous appeal of Mrs. Carlyle for a larger allowance of house money, entitled "Budget of a Femme Incomprise." The arguments and statement of accounts, worthy of a bank auditor, were so irresistible that Carlyle had no resource but to grant the request, *i.e.* practically to raise the amount to £230, instead £200 per annum. It has been calculated that his reliable income even at this time did not exceed £400, but the rent of the house was kept very low, £30: he and his wife lived frugally, so that despite the expenses of the noise-proof room and his German tour he could afford in 1857 to put a stop to her travelling in second-class railway carriages; in 1860, when the success of the first instalment of his great work made an end of financial fears, to keep two servants; and in 1863 to give Mrs. Carlyle a brougham. Few men have left on the whole so unimpeachable a record in money matters.

In November, 1854, there occurred an incident hitherto unrecorded in any biography. The Lord Rectorship of the University of Glasgow having fallen vacant, the "Conservative Club" of the year had put forward Mr. Disraeli as successor to the honorary office. A small body of Mr. Carlyle's admirers among the senior students, on the other side, nominated him, partly as a tribute of respect and gratitude, partly in opposition to a statesman whom they then distrusted. The nomination was, after much debate, adopted by the so-called "Liberal Association" of that day; and, with a curious irony, the author of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* and *Friedrich II.* was pitted, as a Radi-

cal, against the future promoter of the Franchise of 1867 as a Tory. It soon appeared that his supporters had underestimated the extent to which Mr. Carlyle had offended Scotch theological prejudice and outraged the current Philanthropy. His name received some sixty adherents, and had ultimately to be withdrawn. The nomination was received by the Press, and other exponents of popular opinion, with denunciations that came loudest and longest from the leaders of orthodox dissent, then arrogating to themselves the profession of Liberalism and the initiation of Reform. Among the current expressions in reference to his social and religious creeds were the following:

Carlyle's philanthropy is not that of Howard, his cure for national distress is to bury our paupers in peat bogs, driving wooden boards on the top of them. His entire works may be described as reiterating the doctrine that "whatever is is wrong." He has thrown off every form of religious belief and settled down into the conviction that the Christian profession of Englishmen is a sham. . . . Elect him and you bid God-speed to Pantheism and spiritualism.¹ Mr. Carlyle neither possesses the talent nor the distinction, nor does he occupy the position which entitle a man to such an honour as the Rectorial Chair. The *Scotch Guardian* writes: But for the folly exhibited in bringing forward Mr. Disraeli, scarcely any party within the College or out of it would have ventured to nominate a still more obnoxious personage. This is the first instance we have been able to discover in which the suffrages of the youth of the University have been sought for a candidate who denied in his writings that the revealed Word of God is "the way, the truth, the life." It is impossible to separate Mr. Carlyle from that obtrusive feature of his works

¹ Mr. Wylie states that "twice before his election by his own University he (Carlyle) had been invited to allow himself to be nominated for the office of Lord Rector, once by students in the University of Glasgow and once by those of Aberdeen; but both of these invitations he had declined." This as regards Glasgow is incorrect.

in which the solemn verities of our holy religion are sneered at as worn-out "biblicalities," "unbelievabilities," and religious profession is denounced as "dead putrescent cant." The reader of the *Life of Sterling* is not left to doubt for a moment the author's malignant hostility to the religion of the Bible. In that work, saving faith is described as "stealing into heaven by the modern method of sticking ostrich-like your head into fallacies on earth," that is to say, by believing in the doctrines of the Gospels. How, after this, could the Principal and Professors of the University, the guardians of the faiths and morals of its inexperienced youth, accompany to the Common Hall, and allow to address the students a man who has degraded his powers to the life-labour of sapping and mining the foundations of the truth, and opened the fire of his fiendish raillery against the citadel of our best aspirations and dearest hopes.

In the result, two men of genius¹—however diverse—were discarded, and a Scotch nobleman of conspicuous talent, always an active, if not intrusive, champion of orthodoxy, was returned by an "overwhelming majority." In answer to intelligence transmitted to Mr. Carlyle of these events, the president of the Association of his supporters—who had nothing on which to congratulate themselves save that only the benches of the rooms in which they held their meetings had been riotously broken, received the following previously unpublished letter:

CHelsea, 16th December, 1854.

DEAR SIR,—I have received your Pamphlet; and return many thanks for all your kindness to me. I am sorry to learn, as I do for the first time from this narrative, what angry nonsense some of my countrymen see good to write of me. Not being much a reader of Newspapers, I had hardly heard of the Election till after it was finished; and I did not know that anything of this melancholy element

¹ For the elucidation of some points of contact between Carlyle and Lord Beaconsfield, *vide* Mr. Froude's *Life* of the latter.

of Heterodoxy, "Pantheism," etc., etc., had been introduced into the matter. It is an evil, after its sort, this of being hated and denounced by fools and ignorant persons; but it cannot be mended for the present, and so must be left standing there.

That another wiser class think differently, nay, that they alone have any real knowledge of the question, or any real right to vote upon it, is surely an abundant compensation. If that be so, then all is still right; and probably there is no harm done at all!—To you, and the other young gentlemen who have gone with you on this occasion, I can only say that I feel you have loyally meant to do me a great honour and kindness; that I am deeply sensible of your genial recognition, of your noble enthusiasm (which reminds me of my own young years); and that in fine there is no loss or gain of an Election which can in the least alter these valuable facts, or which is not wholly insignificant to me in comparison with them. "Elections" are not a thing transacted by the gods, in general; and I have known very unbeautiful creatures "elected" to be kings, chief-priests, railway kings, etc., by the "most sweet voices," and the spiritual virtue that inspires these, in our time!

Leaving all that, I will beg you all to retain your honourable good feelings towards me; and to think that if anything I have done or written can help any one of you in the noble problem of living like a wise man in these evil and foolish times, it will be more valuable to me than never so many Elections or Non-elections.

With many good wishes and regards I heartily thank you all, and remain,

Yours very sincerely,

T. CARLYLE.

Carlyle's letters to strangers are always valuable, for they are terse and reticent. In writing to weavers, like Bamford; to men in trouble, as Cooper; to students, statesmen, or earnest inquirers of whatever degree, a genuine sympathy for them takes the place of the sympathy for himself, often too prominent in the copious effusions to his intimates. The letter above quoted is of special interest, as belonging to a time from which comparatively few survive; when he was fairly under weigh with a task which seemed

to grow in magnitude under his gaze. The *Life of Friedrich* could not be a succession of dramatic scenes, like the *French Revolution*, nor a biography like *Cromwell*, illustrated by the surrounding events of thirty years. Carlyle found, to his dismay, that he had involved himself in writing the History of Germany, and in a measure of Europe, during the eighteenth century, a period perhaps the most tangled and difficult to deal with of any in the world's annals. He was like a man who, with intent to dig up a pine, found himself tugging at the roots of an Igdrasil that twined themselves under a whole Hercynian forest. His constant cries of positive pain in the progress of the work are distressing, as his indomitable determination to wrestle with and prevail over it is inspiring. There is no imaginable image that he does not press into his service in rattling the chains of his voluntary servitude. Above all, he groans over the unwieldy mass of his authorities—"anti-solar systems of chaff."

I read old German books dull as stupidity itself — nay, superannuated stupidity—gain with labour the dreariest glimpses of unimportant extinct human beings. . . . but when I begin operating: *how* to reduce that widespread black desert of Brandenburg sand to a small human garden! . . . I have no capacity of grasping the big chaos that lies around me, and reducing it to order. Order! Reducing! It is like compelling the grave to give up its dead!

Elsewhere he compares his travail with the monster of his own creation to "Balder's ride to the death kingdoms, through frozen rain, sound of subterranean torrents, leaden-coloured air;" and in the retrospect of the *Reminiscences* touchingly refers to his thirteen years of rarely relieved isolation. "A desperate dead-lift pull all that time; my whole strength devoted to it . . . withdrawn from all the

world." He received few visitors and had few correspondents, but kept his life vigorous by riding on his horse Fritz (the gift of the Marshalls), "during that book, some 30,000 miles, much of it, all the winter part of it, under cloud of night, sun just setting when I mounted. All the rest of the day I sat, silent, aloft, insisting upon work, and such work, *invitissimâ Minervâ*, for that matter." Mrs. Carlyle¹ had her usual share of the sufferings involved in "the awful *Friedrich*." "That tremendous book," she writes, "made prolonged and entire devastation of any satisfactory semblance of home life or home happiness." But when at last, by help of Neuberg and of Mr. Larkin, who made the maps of the whole book, the first two volumes were in type (they appeared in autumn, 1858), his wife hailed them in a letter sent from Edinburgh to Chelsea: "Oh, my dear, what a magnificent book this is going to be, the best of all your books, forcible, clear, and sparkling as the *French Revolution*; compact and finished as *Cromwell*. Yes, you shall see that it will be the best of all your books, and small thanks to it, it has taken a doing." On which the author naïvely purrs: "It would be worth while to write books, if mankind would read them as you." Later he speaks of his wife's recognition and that of Emerson—who wrote enthusiastically of the art of the work, though much of it was across his grain—as "the only bit

¹ Carlyle himself writes: "I felt well enough how it was crushing down her existence, as it was crushing down my own; and the thought that she had not been at the choosing of it, and yet must suffer so for it, was occasionally bitter to me. But the practical conclusion always was, Get done with it, get done with it! For the saving of us both that is the one outlook. And sure enough, I did stand by that dismal task with all my time and all my means; day and night wrestling with it, as with the ugliest dragon, which blotted out the daylight and the rest of the world to me till I should get it slain."

of human criticism in which he could discern lineaments of the thing." But the book was a swift success, two editions of 2000 and another of 1000 copies being sold in a comparatively brief space. Carlyle's references to this—after his return from another visit to the north and the second trip to Germany—seem somewhat ungracious :

Book . . . much babbled over in newspapers . . . no better to me than the barking of dogs . . . officious people put reviews into my hands, and in an idle hour I glanced partly into these ; but it would have been better not, so sordidly ignorant and impertinent were they, though generally laudatory.

But these notices recall the fact familiar to every writer, that while the assailants of a book sometimes read it, favourable reviewers hardly ever do ; these latter save their time by payment of generally superficial praise, and a few random quotations.

Carlyle scarcely enjoyed his brief respite on being discharged of the first instalment of his book : the remainder lay upon him like a menacing nightmare ; he never ceased to feel that the work must be completed ere he could be free, and that to accomplish this he must be alone. Never absent from his wife without regrets, lamentations, contrite messages, and childlike entreaties for her to "come and protect him," when she came it was to find that they were better apart ; for his temper was never softened by success. "Living beside him," she writes in 1858, is "the life of a weathercock in high wind." During a brief residence together in a hired house near Aberdour in Fife-shire, she compares herself to a keeper in a mad-house ; and writes later from Sunnybank to her husband, "If you could fancy me in some part of the house out of sight, my absence would make little difference to you, considering

how little I do see of you, and how preoccupied you are when I do see you." Carlyle answers in his touching strain, "We have had a sore life pilgrimage together, much bad road. Oh, forgive me!" and sends her beautiful descriptions; but her disposition, not wholly forgiving, received them somewhat sceptically. "Byron," said Lady Byron, "can write anything, but he does not feel it;" and Mrs. Carlyle on one occasion told her "harsh spouse" that his fine passages were very well written for the sake of future biographers: a charge he almost indignantly repudiates. He was then, August, 1860, staying at Thurso Castle, the guest of Sir George Sinclair; a visit that terminated in an unfortunate careless mistake about a sudden change of plans, resulting in his wife, then with the Stanleys at Alderley, being driven back to Chelsea and deprived of her promised pleasure and requisite rest with her friends in the north.

The frequency of such incidents—each apart capable of being palliated by the same fallacy of division that has attempted in vain to justify the domestic career of Henry VIII.—points to the conclusion of Miss Gully that Carlyle, though often nervous on the subject, acted to his wife as if he were "totally inconsiderate of her health," so much so that she received medical advice not to be much at home when he was in the stress of writing. In January, 1858, he writes to his brother John an anxious letter in reference to a pain about a hand-breadth below the heart, of which she had begun to complain, the premonitory symptom of the disease which ultimately proved fatal; but he was not sufficiently impressed to give due heed to the warning; nor was it possible, with his long-engrained habits, to remove the Marah spring that lay under all the wearisome bickerings, repentances, and renewals of offence. The

"very little herring" who declined to be made a part of Lady Ashburton's luggage now suffered more than ever from her inanimate rival. The highly-endowed wife of one of the most eminent philanthropists of America, whose life was devoted to the awakening of defective intellects, thirty-five years ago murmured, "If I were only an idiot!" Similarly Mrs. Carlyle might have remonstrated, "Why was I not born a book?" Her letters and journal teem to tiresomeness with the refrain, "I feel myself extremely neglected for unborn generations." Her once considerable ambitions had been submerged, and her own vivid personality overshadowed by a man she was afraid to meet at breakfast, and glad to avoid at dinner. A woman of immense talent and a spark of genius linked to a man of vast genius and imperious will, she had no choice but to adopt his judgments, intensify his dislikes, and give a sharper edge to his sneers.

Mr. Froude, who for many years lived too near the sun to see the sun, and inconsistently defends many of the inconsistencies he has himself inherited from his master, yet admits that Carlyle treated the Broad Church party in the English Church with some injustice. His recorded estimates of the leading theologians of the age, and personal relation to them, are hopelessly bewildering. His long life friendship for Erskine of Linlathen is intelligible, though he did not extend the same charity to what he regarded as the muddle-headedness of Maurice (Erskine's spiritual inspirer), and keenly ridiculed the reconciliation pamphlet entitled "Subscription no Bondage." The Essayists and Reviewers, "Septem contra Christum," "should," he said, "be shot for deserting their posts;" even Dean Stanley their *amicus curiæ*, whom he liked, came in for a share of his sarcasm; "there he goes," he said to Froude, "boring holes in the bottom of the Church of England." Of

Colenso, who was doing as much as any one for the "Exodus from Houndsditch," he spoke with open contempt, saying, "he mistakes for fame an extended pillory that he is standing on;" and was echoed by his wife, "Colenso isn't worth talking about for five minutes, except for the absurdity of a man making arithmetical onslaughts on the Pentateuch with a bishop's little black silk apron." This is not the place to discuss the controversy involved; but we are bound to note the fact that Carlyle was, by an inverted Scotch intolerance, led to revile men rowing in the same boat as himself, but with a different stroke. To another Broad Churchman, Charles Kingsley, partly from sympathy with this writer's imaginative power, he was more considerate; and one of the still deeply religious freethinkers of the time was among his closest friends. The death of Arthur Clough in 1861 left another blank in Carlyle's life: we have had in this century to lament the comparatively early loss of few men of finer genius. Clough had not, perhaps, the practical force of Sterling, but his work is of a higher order than any of the fragments of the earlier favourite. Among High Churchmen Carlyle commended Dr. Pusey as "solid and judicious," and fraternised with the Bishop of Oxford; but he called Keble "an ape," and said of Cardinal Newman that he had "no more brains than an ordinary-sized rabbit."

These years are otherwise marked by his most glaring political blunder. The Civil War, then raging in America, brought, with its close, the abolition of Slavery throughout the States, a consummation for which he cared little, for he had never professed to regard the negroes as fit for freedom; but this result, though inevitable, was incidental. As is known to every one who has the remotest knowledge of Transatlantic history, the war was in a great measure a

struggle for the preservation of National Unity: but it was essentially more; it was the vindication of Law and Order against the lawless and disorderly violence of those who, when defeated at the polling-booth, flew to the bowie-knife; an assertion of Right as Might, for which Carlyle cared everything; yet all he had to say of it was his "Ilias Americana in nuce," published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, August, 1863.

Peter of the North (to Paul of the South): "Paul, you unaccountable scoundrel, I find you hire your servants for life, not by the month or year as I do. You are going straight to Hell, you—"

Paul: "Good words, Peter. The risk is my own. I am willing to take the risk. Hire you your servants by the month or the day, and get straight to Heaven; leave me to my own method."

Peter: "No, I won't. I will beat your brains out first!" [And is trying dreadfully ever since, but cannot yet manage it.]

This, except the *Prinzenraub*, a dramatic presentation of a dramatic incident in old German history, was his only side publication during the writing of *Friedrich*.

After the war ended and Emerson's letters of remonstrance had proved prophetic, Carlyle is said to have confessed to Mr. Moncure Conway, as well as to Mr. Froude, that he "had not seen to the bottom of the matter." But his republication of this nadir of his nonsense was an offence, emphasising the fact that, however inspiring, he is not always a safe guide, even to those content to abide by his own criterion of success.

There remains of this period the record of a triumph and of a tragedy. After seven years more of rarely intermitted toil, broken only by a few visits, trips to the sea-shore, etc., and the distress of the terrible accident to his wife—her fall on a curb-stone and dislocation of a limb—

which has been often sufficiently detailed, he had finished his last great work. The third volume of *Friedrich* was published in May, 1862, the fourth appeared in February, 1864, the fifth and sixth in March, 1865. Carlyle had at last slain his Minotaur, and stood before the world as a victorious Theseus, everywhere courted and acclaimed, his hard-earned rest only disturbed by a shower of honours. His position as the foremost prose writer of his day was as firmly established in Germany, where his book was at once translated and read by all readers of history, as in England. Scotland, now fully awake to her reflected fame, made haste to make amends. Even the leaders of the sects, bond and "free," who had denounced him, were now eager to proclaim that he had been intrinsically all along, though sometimes in disguise, a champion of their faith. No men knew better how to patronise, or even seem to lead, what they had failed to quell. The Universities made haste with their burnt-offerings. In 1856 a body of Edinburgh students had prematurely repeated the attempt of their forerunners in Glasgow to confer on him their Lord Rectorship, and failed. In 1865 he was elected, in opposition again to Mr. Disraeli, to succeed Mr. Gladstone, the genius of elections being in a jesting mood. He was prevailed on to accept the honour, and, later, consented to deliver in the spring of 1866 the customary Inaugural Address. Mrs. Carlyle's anxiety on this occasion as to his success and his health is a tribute to her constant and intense fidelity. He went north to his Installation, under the kind care of encouraging friends, imprimis of Professor Tyndall,¹ one of his truest; they stopped on the

¹ For the most interesting, loyally sympathetic, and characteristic account of Carlyle's journey north on this occasion, and of the inci-

road at Fryston, with Lord Houghton, and there met Professor Huxley, who accompanied them to Edinburgh. Carlyle, having resolved to speak and not merely to read what he had to say, was oppressed with nervousness; and of the event itself he writes: "My speech was delivered in a mood of defiant despair, and under the pressure of nightmare. Some feeling that I was not speaking lies alone sustained me. The applause, etc., I took for empty noise, which it really was not altogether." The address, nominally on the "Reading of Books," really a rapid autobiography of his own intellectual career, with references to history, literature, religion, and the conduct of life, was, as Tyndall telegraphed to Mrs. Carlyle—save for some difficulty the speaker had in making himself audible—"a perfect triumph." His reception by one of the most enthusiastic audiences ever similarly assembled marked the climax of a steadily-increasing fame. It may be compared to the late welcome given to Wordsworth in the Oxford Theatre. After four days spent with Erskine and his own brother James in Edinburgh, he went for a week's quiet to Scotsbrig, and was kept there, lingering longer than he had intended, by a sprained ankle, "blessed in the country stillness, the purity of sky and earth, and the absence of all babble." On April 20th he wrote his last letter to his wife, a letter which she never read. On the evening of Saturday, the 21st, when staying on the way south at his sister's house at Dumfries, he received a telegram informing him that the companionship of more than forty years—companionship of struggle and victory, of sad and sweet so strangely blent—was forever at an end.

dents which followed, we may refer to *New Fragments*, by John Tyndall, just published.

Mrs. Carlyle had been found dead in her carriage when driving round Hyde Park on the afternoon of that day, her death (from heart disease) being accelerated by an accident to a favourite little dog. Carlyle felt as "one who hath been stunned," hardly able to realise his loss. "They took me out next day . . . to wander in the green sunny Sabbath fields, and ever and anon there rose from my sick heart the ejaculation, 'My poor little woman!' but no full gust of tears came to my relief, nor has yet come." On the following Monday he set off with his brother for London. "Never for a thousand years shall I forget that arrival here of ours, my first unwelcomed by her. She lay in her coffin, lovely in death. Pale death and things not mine or ours had possession of our poor darling." On Wednesday they returned, and on Thursday the 26th she was buried in the nave of the old Abbey Kirk at Haddington, in the grave of her father. The now desolate old man, who had walked with her over many a stony road, paid the first of his many regretful tributes in the epitaph inscribed over her tomb: in which follows, after the name and date of birth:

IN HER BRIGHT EXISTENCE SHE HAD MORE SORROWS THAN ARE COMMON, BUT ALSO A SOFT INVINCIBILITY, A CAPACITY OF DISCERNMENT, AND A NOBLE LOYALTY OF HEART WHICH ARE RARE. FOR 40 YEARS SHE WAS THE TRUE AND LOVING HELPMATE OF HER HUSBAND, AND BY ACT AND WORD UNWEARIEDLY FORWARDED HIM AS NONE ELSE COULD IN ALL OF WORTHY THAT HE DID OR ATTEMPTED. SHE DIED AT LONDON, 21ST APRIL, 1866, SUDDENLY SNATCHED FROM HIM, AND THE LIGHT OF HIS LIFE AS IF GONE OUT.

CHAPTER VII.

DECADENCE.

[1866-1881.]

AFTER this shock of bereavement Carlyle's days went by "on broken wing," never brightening, slowly saddening to the close; but lit up at intervals by flashes of the indomitable energy that, starting from no vantage, had conquered a world of thought, and established in it, if not a new dynasty, at least an intellectual throne. Expressions of sympathy came to him from all directions, from the Queen herself downwards, and he received them with the grateful acknowledgment that he had, after all, been loved by his contemporaries. When the question arose as to his future life, it seemed a natural arrangement that he and his brother John, then a childless widower who had retired from his profession with a competence, should take up house together. The experiment was made, but, to the discredit of neither, it proved a failure. They were in some respects too much alike. John would not surrender himself wholly to the will or whims even of one whom he revered, and the attempt was, by mutual consent, abandoned; but their affectionate correspondence lasted through the period of their joint lives. Carlyle, being left to himself in his "gaunt and lonesome home," after a short visit to Miss Bromley, an intimate friend of his wife, at her residence in Kent, accepted the invitation of the second

Lady Ashburton to spend the winter in her house at Mentone. There he arrived on Christmas Eve, 1866, under the kind convoy of Professor Tyndall, and remained breathing the balmy air and gazing on the violet sea till March of the following year. During the interval he occupied himself in writing his *Reminiscences*, drawing pen-and-ink pictures of the country, steeped in beauty fit to soothe any sorrow save such as his, and taking notes of some of the passers-by. Of the greatest celebrity then encountered, Mr. Gladstone, he writes in his journal, in a tone intensified as time went on: "Talk copious, ingenious . . . a man of ardent faculty, but all gone irrevocably into House of Commons shape. . . . Man once of some wisdom or possibility of it, but now possessed by the Prince, or many Princes of the Air." Back in Chelsea, he was harassed by heaps of letters, most of which, we are told, he answered, and spent a large portion of his time and means in charities.

Amid Carlyle's irreconcilable inconsistencies of theory, and sometimes of conduct, he was through life consistent in practical benevolence. The interest in the welfare of the working classes that in part inspired his *Sartor*, *Chartism*, and *Past and Present* never failed him. He was among the foremost in all national movements to relieve and solace their estate. He was, further, with an amiable disregard of his own maxims, overlenient towards the waifs and strays of humanity, in some instances careless to inquire too closely into the causes of their misfortune or the degree of their demerits. In his latter days this disposition grew upon him: the gray of his own evening skies made him fuller of compassion to all who lived in the shade. Sad himself, he mourned with those who mourned; afflicted, he held out hands to all in affliction. Conse-

quently "the poor were always with him," writing, entreating, and personally soliciting all sorts of alms, from advice and help to ready money. His biographer informs us that he rarely gave an absolute refusal to any of these various classes of beggars. He answered a letter which is a manifest parody of his own surface misanthropy; he gave a guinea to a ticket-of-leave-man, pretending to be a decayed tradesman; and a shilling to a street sweeper, who at once took it over his crossing to a gin-shop. Froude remonstrated; "poor fellow," was the answer, "I dare say he is cold and thirsty." The memory of Wordsworth is less warmly cherished among the dales of Westmoreland than that of Carlyle in the lanes of Chelsea, where "his one expensive luxury was charity."

His attitude on political questions, in which for ten years he still took a more or less prominent part, represents him on his sterner side. The first of these was the controversy about Governor Eyre, who, having suppressed the Jamaica rebellion by the violent and, as alleged, cruel use of martial law, and hung a quadroon preacher called Gordon—the man whether honest or not being an undoubted incendiary—without any law at all, was by the force of popular indignation dismissed in disgrace, and then arraigned for misgovernment and illegality. In the movement which resulted in the governor's recall and impeachment, there was doubtless the usual amount of exaggeration—represented by the violent language of one of Carlyle's minor biographers: "There were more innocent people slain than at Jeffrey's Bloody Assize;" "The massacre of Glencoe was nothing to it;" "Members of Christian Churches were flogged," etc., etc.—but among its leaders there were so many men of mark and celebrity, men like John S. Mill, T. Hughes, John Bright, Fawcett, Cairnes, Goldwin Smith,

Herbert Spencer, and Frederick Harrison, that it could not be set aside as a mere unreasoning clamour. It was a hard test of Carlyle's theory of strong government; and he stood to his colours. Years before, on John Sterling suggesting that the negroes themselves should be consulted as to making a permanent engagement with their masters, he had said, "I never thought the rights of the negroes worth much discussing in any form. Quashee will get himself made a slave again, and with beneficent whip will be compelled to work." On this occasion he regarded the black rebellion in the same light as the Sepoy revolt. He organised and took the chair of a "Defence Committee," joined or backed by Ruskin, Henry Kingsley, Tyndall, Sir R. Murchison, Sir T. Gladstone, and others. "I never," says Mr. Froude, "knew Carlyle more anxious about anything." He drew up a petition to Government and exerted himself heart and soul for the "brave, gentle, chivalrous, and clear man," who when the ship was on fire "had been called to account for having flung a bucket or two of water into the hold beyond what was necessary." He had damaged some of the cargo perhaps, but he had saved the ship, and deserved to be made "dictator of Jamaica for the next twenty-five years," to govern after the model of Dr. Francia in Paraguay. The committee failed to get Eyre reinstated or his pension restored; but the impeachment was unsuccessful.

The next great event was the passing of the Reform Bill of 1867, by the Tories, educated by Mr. Disraeli to this method of "dishing the Whigs," by outbidding them in the scramble for votes. This instigated the famous tract called *Shooting Niagara*, written in the spirit of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*—Carlyle's final and unqualified denunciation of this concession to Democracy and all its

works. But the upper classes in England seemed indifferent to the warning. "Niagara, or what you like," the author quotes as the saying of a certain shining countess, "we will at least have a villa on the Mediterranean when Church and State have gone." A *mot* emphatically of the decadence.

Later he fulminated against the Clerkenwell explosions being a means of bringing the Irish question within the range of practical politics.

I sit in speechless admiration of our English treatment of those Fenians first and last. It is as if the rats of a house had decided to expel and extirpate the human inhabitants, which latter seemed to have neither rat-catchers, traps, nor arsenic, and are trying to prevail by the method of love.

Governor Eyre, with Spenser's Essay on Ireland and Cromwell's storm of Drogheda for his texts, or Otto von Bismarck, would have been, in his view, in place at Dublin Castle.

In the next great event of the century, the close of the greatest European struggle since Waterloo, the cause which pleased Cato pleased also the gods. Carlyle, especially in his later days, had a deepening confidence in the Teutonic, a growing distrust of the Gallic race. He regarded the contest between them as one between Ormuzd and Ahriman, and wrote of Sedan, as he had written of Rossbach, with exultation. When a feeling began in this country, naming itself sympathy for the fallen—really half that, the other half, as in the American war, being jealousy of the victor—and threatened to be dangerous, Carlyle wrote a decisive letter to the *Times*, November 11th, 1870, tracing the sources of the war back to the robberies of Louis XIV., and ridiculing the prevailing sentiment about the recapt-

ured provinces of Lothringen and Elsass. With a possible reference to Victor Hugo and his clients, he remarks:

They believe that they are the "Christ of Nations." . . . I wish they would inquire whether there might not be a Cartouche of nations. Cartouche had many gallant qualities—had many fine ladies begging locks of his hair while the indispensable gibbet was preparing. Better he should obey the heavy-handed Teutsch police officer, who has him by the windpipe in such frightful manner, give up part of his stolen goods, altogether cease to be a Cartouche, and try to become again a Chevalier Bayard. All Europe does *not* come to the rescue in gratitude for the heavenly illumination it is getting from France: nor could all Europe if it did prevent that awful Chancellor from having his own way. Metz and the boundary fence, I reckon, will be dreadfully hard to get out of that Chancellor's hands again. . . . Considerable misconception as to Herr von Bismarck is still prevalent in England. He, as I read him, is not a person of Napoleonic ideas, but of ideas quite superior to Napoleonic. . . . That noble, patient, deep, pious, and solid Germany should be at length welded into a nation, and become Queen of the Continent, instead of vapouring, vainglorious, gesticulating, quarrelsome, restless, and over-sensitive France, seems to me the hopefulest fact that has occurred in my time.

Carlyle seldom wrote with more force, or with more justice. Only, to be complete, his paper should have ended with a warning. He has done more than any other writer to perpetuate in England the memories of the great thinkers and actors—Fichte, Richter, Arndt, Körner, Stein, Goethe—who taught their countrymen how to endure defeat and retrieve adversity. Who will celebrate their yet undefined successors, who will train Germany gracefully to bear the burden of prosperity? Two years later Carlyle wrote, or rather dictated, for his hand was beginning to shake, his historical sketch of the *Early Kings of Norway*, showing no diminution of power either of thought or expression, his estimates of the three Hakons and of the three

Olafs being especially notable; and a paper on *The Portraits of John Knox*, the prevailing dull gray of which is relieved by a radiant vision of Mary Stuart.

He was incited to another public protest, when, in May, 1877, towards the close of the Russo-Turkish war, he had got, or imagined himself to have got, reliable information that Lord Beaconsfield, then Prime Minister, having sent our fleet to the Dardanelles, was planning to seize Gallipoli and throw England into the struggle. Carlyle never seems to have contemplated the possibility of a Sclavo-Gallic alliance against the forces of civilised order in Europe, and he chose to think of the Czars as the representatives of an enlightened autocracy. We are here mainly interested in the letter he wrote to the *Times*, as "his last public act in this world"—the phrase of Mr. Froude, who does not give the letter, and unaccountably says it "was brief, not more than three or four lines." It is as follows:

SIR,—A rumour everywhere prevails that our miraculous Premier, in spite of the Queen's Proclamation of Neutrality, intends, under cover of care for "British interests" to send the English fleet to the Baltic, or do some other feat which shall compel Russia to declare war against England. Latterly the rumour has shifted from the Baltic and become still more sinister, on the eastern side of the scene, where a feat is contemplated that will force, not Russia only, but all Europe, to declare war against us. This latter I have come to know as an indisputable fact; in our present affairs and outlooks surely a grave one.

As to "British interests" there is none visible or conceivable to me, except taking strict charge of our route to India by Suez and Egypt, and for the rest, resolutely steering altogether clear of any co-partnery with the Turk in regard to this or any other "British interest" whatever. It should be felt by England as a real ignominy to be connected with such a Turk at all. Nay, if we still had, as we ought to have, a wish to save him from perdition and annihilation in God's world, the one future for him that has any hope in it is even

now that of being conquered by the Russians, and gradually schooled and drilled into peaceable attempt at learning to be himself governed. The newspaper outcry against Russia is no more respectable to me than the howling of Bedlam, proceeding as it does from the deepest ignorance, egoism, and paltry national jealousy.

These things I write, not on hearsay, but on accurate knowledge, and to all friends of their country will recommend immediate attention to them while there is yet time, lest in a few weeks the maddest and most criminal thing that a British government could do, should be done and all Europe kindle into flames of war.—I am, etc.,

T. CARLYLE.

5 CHEYNE ROW, CHELSEA,

May 4th.

Meanwhile honours without stint were being rendered to the great author and venerable sage. In 1868 he had by request a personal interview with the Queen, and has left, in a letter, a graphic account of the interview at the Deanery of Westminster. Great artists, as Millais, Watts, and Boehme, vied with each other, in painting or sculpture, to preserve his lineaments; prominent reviews to record their impression of his work, and disciples to show their gratitude. One of these, Professor Masson of Edinburgh, in memory of Carlyle's own tribute to Goethe, started a subscription for a medal, presented on his eightieth birthday; but he valued more a communication of the same date from Prince Bismarck. Count Bernstoff from Berlin wrote him (1871) a semi-official letter of thanks for the services he had conferred on Germany, and in 1874 he was prevailed on to accept the Prussian "Ordre pour le mérite." In the same year Mr. Disraeli proposed, in courteous oblivion of by-gone hostilities, to confer on him a pension and the "Order of the Grand Cross of the Bath," an emolument and distinction which Carlyle, with equal courtesy, declined. To the Countess of Derby, whom he believed

to be the originator of the scheme, he (December 30th) expressed his sense of the generosity of the Premier's letter: "It reveals to me, after all the hard things I have said of him, a new and unexpected stratum of genial dignity and manliness of character." To his brother John he wrote: "I do, however, truly admire the magnanimity of Dizzy in regard to me. He is the only man I almost never spoke of without contempt . . . and yet see here he comes with a pan of hot coals for my guilty head." That he was by no means gagged by personal feeling or seduced in matters of policy is evident from the above-quoted letter to the *Times*; but he liked Disraeli better than his great rival; the one may have bewildered his followers, the other, according to his critic's view, deceived himself—the lie, in Platonic phrase, had got into the soul, till, to borrow an epigram, "he made his conscience not his guide but his accomplice." "Carlyle," says Mr. Froude, "did not regard Mr. Gladstone merely as an orator who, knowing nothing as it ought to be known, had flung his force into specious sentiments, but as the representative of the numerous cants of the age . . . differing from others in that the cant seemed true to him. He in fact believed him to be one of those fatal figures created by England's evil genius to work irreparable mischief." It must be admitted that Carlyle's censures are so broadcast as to lose half their sting. In uncontroversial writing, it is enough to note that his methods of reforming the world and Mr. Gladstone's were as far as the poles asunder; and the admirers of the latter may console themselves with the reflection that the censor was, at the same time, talking with equal disdain of the scientific discoverers of the age—conspicuously of Mr. Darwin, whom he describes as "evolving man's soul from frog spawn," adding, "I have no patience

with these gorilla damnifications of humanity." Other criticisms, as those of George Eliot, whose *Adam Bede* he pronounced "simply dull," display a curious limitation or obtuseness of mind.

One of the pleasantest features of his declining years is the ardour of his attachment to the few staunch friends who helped to cheer and console them. He had a sincere regard for Fitzjames Stephen, "an honest man with heavy strokes;" for Sir Garnet Wolseley, to whom he said in effect, "Your duty one day will be to take away that bauble and close the doors of the House of Discord;" for Tyndall always; for Lecky, despite their differences; for Moncreu Conway, athwart the question of "nigger" philanthropies; for Kingsley and Tennyson and Browning, the last of whom was a frequent visitor till near the end. Froude he had bound to his soul by hoops of steel; and a more faithful disciple and apostle, in intention always, in practice in the main (despite the most perplexing errors of judgment), no professed prophet ever had. But Carlyle's highest praise is reserved for Ruskin, whom he regarded as no mere art critic, but as a moral power worthy to receive and carry onward his own "cross of fire." The relationship between the two great writers is unchecked by any shade of patronage on the one hand, of jealousy or adulation on the other. The elder recognised in the younger an intellect as keen, a spirit as fearless as his own, who in the Eyre controversy had "plunged his rapier to the hilt in the entrails of the Blatant Beast," *i.e.* Popular Opinion. He admired all Ruskin's books; the *Stones of Venice*, the most solid structure of the group, he named "Sermons in Stones;" he resented an attack on *Sesame and Lilies* as if it had been his own; and passages of the *Queen of the Air* went into his heart "like arrows." The

Order of the Rose has attempted a practical embodiment of the review contemplated by Carlyle, as a counteractive to the money-making practice and expediency worships of the day.

Meanwhile he had been putting his financial affairs in order. In 1867, on return from Mentone, he had recorded his bequest of the revenues of Craigenputtock for the endowment of three John Welsh bursaries in the University of Edinburgh. In 1873 he made his will, leaving John Forster and Froude his literary executors: a legacy of trust which, on the death of the former, fell to the latter, to whose discretion, by various later bequests, less and less limited, there was confided the choice—at last almost made a duty—of editing and publishing the manuscripts and journals of himself and his wife.

Early in his seventy-third year (December, 1867) Carlyle quotes, "Youth is a garland of roses," adding, "I did not find it such. 'Age is a crown of thorns.' Neither is this altogether true for me. If sadness and sorrow tend to loosen us from life, they make the place of rest more desirable." The talk of Socrates in the *Republic*, and the fine phrases in Cicero's *De Senectute*, hardly touch on the great grief, apart from physical infirmities, of old age—its increasing solitariness. After sixty, a man may make disciples and converts, but few new friends, while the old ones die daily; the "familiar faces" vanish in the night to which there is no morning, and leave nothing in their stead.

During these years Carlyle's former intimates were falling round him like the leaves from an autumn tree, and the kind care of the few survivors, with the solicitous attention of his niece, nurse, and amanuensis, Mary Aitken, left him desolate. Clough had died, and Thomas Erskine and John Forster and Wilberforce, with whom he thought

he agreed, and Mill, his old champion and ally, with whom he so disagreed that he almost maligned his memory—calling one of the most interesting of autobiographies “the life of a logic-chopping machine.” In March, 1876, he attended the funeral of Lady Augusta Stanley; in the following month his brother Aleck died in Canada; and in 1878 his brother John at Dumfries. He seemed destined to be left alone; his physical powers were waning. In 1879 he and his last horse “Comet” had their last ride together; later, his right hand failed, and he had to write by dictation. In the gathering gloom he began to look on death as a release from the shreds of life, and to envy the old Roman mode of shuffling off the coil. His thoughts turned more and more to Hamlet’s question of the possible dreams hereafter, and his longing for his lost Jeannie made him beat at the iron gates of the “Undiscovered Country” with a yearning cry, but he could get no answer from reason, and would not seek it in any form of superstition, least of all the latest, that of stealing into heaven “by way of mesmeric and spiritualistic trances.” His question and answer are always:

Strength quite a stranger to me. . . . Life is verily a weariness on those terms. Oftenest I feel willing to go, were my time come. Sweet to rejoin, were it only in eternal sleep, those that are away. That . . . is now and then the whisper of my worn-out heart, and a kind of solace to me. “But why annihilation or eternal sleep?” I ask, too. They and I are alike in the will of the Highest.

“When,” says Mr. Froude, “he spoke of the future and its uncertainties, he fell back invariably on the last words of his favourite hymn:

Wir heissen euch hoffen.”

His favourite quotations in those days were Macbeth's "To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow;" Burns's line, "Had we never lo'ed sae kindly"—thinking of the tomb which he was wont to kiss in the gloamin' in Haddington Church—the lines from "The Tempest" ending, "our little life is rounded with a sleep," and the dirge in "Cymbeline." He lived on during the last years, save for his quiet walks with his biographer about the banks of the Thames, like a ghost among ghosts, his physical life slowly ebbing till, on February 4th, 1881, it ebbed away. His remains were, by his own desire, conveyed to Ecclefechan and laid under the snow-clad soil of the rural church-yard, beside the dust of his kin. He had objected to be buried, should the request be made (as it was by Dean Stanley), in Westminster Abbey: ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ἐπιφανῶν πᾶσα γῆ τάφος.

Of no man whose life has been so laid bare to us is it more difficult to estimate the character than that of Thomas Carlyle, and regarding no one of equal eminence, with the possible exception of Byron, has opinion been so divided. After his death there was a carnival of applause from his countrymen in all parts of the globe, from Canton to San Francisco. Their hot zeal, only equalled by that of their revelries over the memory of Burns, was unrestrained by limit, order, or degree. No nation is warmer than the Scotch in worship of its heroes when dead and buried: one perfervid enthusiast says of the former, "Atheist, Deist, and Pantheist: Carlyle is gone; his voice, pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free, will be heard no more:" the *Scotsman* newspaper writes of him as "probably the greatest of modern literary men; . . . before the volcanic glare of his *French Revolution* all Epics, ancient and modern, grow pale and shadowy, . . . his like is not now left in the world." More recently a stalwart Aberdonian, on helping

to put a bust into a monument, exclaims in a strain of genuine ardour, "I knew Carlyle, and I aver to you that his heart was as large and generous as his brain was powerful; that he was essentially a most lovable man, and that there were depths of tenderness, kindliness, benevolence, and most delicate courtesy in him, with all his seeming ruggedness and sternness, such as I have found throughout my life rarely in any human being."

On the other side, a little later, after the publication of the *Reminiscences*, *Blackwood* denounced the "old man eloquent" as "a blatant impostor, who speaks as if he were the only person who knew good from bad. . . . Every one and everything dealt with in his *History* is treated in the tone of a virtuous Mephistopheles." The *World* remarks that Carlyle has been made to pay the penalty of a posthumous depreciation for a factitious fame; "but the game of venomous recrimination was begun by himself. . . . There is little that is extraordinary, still less that is heroic in his character. He had no magnanimity about him . . . he was full of littleness and weakness, of shallow dogmatism and of blustering conceit." The *Quarterly*, after alluding to Carlyle's style "as the eccentric expression of eccentricity," denounces his choice of "heroes" as reckless of morality. According to the same authority, he "was not a deep thinker, but he was a great word painter . . . he has the inspiration as well as the contortions of the Sibyl, the strength as well as the nodosities of the oak. . . . In the *French Revolution* he rarely condescends to plain narrative . . . it resembles a drama at the Porte St. Martin, in so many acts and tableaux. . . . The raisers of busts and statues in his honour are winging and pointing new arrows aimed at the reputation of their most distinguished contemporaries, and doing their best to perpetuate a baneful influence."

Fraser, no longer edited by Mr. Froude, swells the chorus of dissent: "Money, for which he cared little, only came in quantity after the death of his wife, when everything became indifferent to an old and life-weary man. Who would be great at such a price? Who would buy so much misery with so much labour? Most men like their work. In his Carlyle seems to have found the curse imposed upon Adam. . . . He cultivated contempt of the kindly race of men."

Ample texts for these and similar censures are to be found in the pages of Mr. Froude, and he has been accused by Carlyle's devotees of having supplied this material of malice prepense. No accusation was ever more ridiculously unjust. To the mind of every impartial reader, Froude appears as one of the loyallest if one of the most infatuated of friends. Living towards the close in almost daily communion with his master, and in inevitable contact with his numerous frailties, he seems to have revered him with a love that passeth understanding, and attributed to him in good faith, as Dryden did in jest to the objects of his mock heroics, every mental as well as every moral power, *e.g.*, "Had Carlyle turned his mind to it he would have been a great philologer." "A great diplomatist was lost in Carlyle." "He would have done better as a man of action than a man of words." By kicking the other diplomatists into the sea, as he threatened to do with the urchins of Kirkcaldy? Froude's panegyrics are in style and tone worthy of that put into the mouth of Pericles by Thucydides, with which the modern biographer closes his only too faithful record. But his claims for his hero—amounting to the assertions that he was never seriously wrong; that he was as good as he was great; that "in the weightier matters of the law his life had been without speck or flaw;" that "such faults as he had were but as

the vapours which hang about a mountain, inseparable from the nature of the man;" that he never, in their intercourse, uttered a "trivial word, nor one which he had better have left unuttered"—these claims will never be honoured, for they are refuted in every third page after that on which they appear: *e.g.* in the Biography, vol. iv., p. 258, we are told that Carlyle's "knowledge was not in points or lines but complete and solid:" facing the remarks we read, "He liked *ill* men like Humboldt, Laplace, or the author of the *Vestiges*. He refused Darwin's transmutation of species as unproved; he fought against it, though I could see he dreaded that it might turn out true." The statement that "he always spoke respectfully of Macaulay" is soon followed by criticisms that make us exclaim, "Save us from such respect." The extraordinary assertion that Carlyle was "always just in speaking of living men" is safeguarded by the quotation of large utterances of injustice and contempt for Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Comte, Balzac, Hugo, Lamb, George Eliot, and disparaging patronage¹ of Scott, of Jeffrey, of Mazzini, and of Mill. The dog-like fidelity of Boswell and Eckermann was fitting to their attitude and capacity; but the spectacle of one great writer surrendering himself to another is a new testimony to the glamour of conversational genius.

Carlyle was a great man, but a great man spoiled—that is, largely soured. He was never a Timon; but, while at

¹ This patronage of men, some quite, others nearly on his own level, whom he delights in calling "small," "thin," and "poor," as if he were the only big, fat, and rich, is more offensive than spurts of merely dyspeptic abuse. As regards the libels on Lamb, Dr. Ireland has endeavoured to establish that they were written in ignorance of the noble tragedy of "Elia's" life; but this contention cannot be made good as regards the later attacks.

best a Stoic, he was at worst a Cynic, emulous though disdainful, trying all men by his own standard, and intolerant of a rival on the throne. To this result there contributed the bleak though bracing environment of his early years, amid kindred more noted for strength than for amenity, whom he loved, trusted, and revered, but from whose grim creed, formally at least, he had to tear himself with violent wrenches apart; his purgatory among the border-ruffians of Annan school; his teaching drudgeries; his hermit college days; ten years' struggle for a meagre competence; a life-long groaning under the Nemesis shirt of the irritable yet stubborn constitution to which genius is often heir; and above all his unusually late recognition. There is a good deal of natural bitterness in reference to the long refusal by the publishers of his first original work—an idyll like Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, and our finest prose poem in philosophy. "Popularity," says Emerson, "is for dolls;" but it remains to find the preacher, prophet, or poet wholly impervious to unjust criticism. Neglect which crushes dwarfs only exasperates giants, but to the latter also there is great harm done. Opposition affected Carlyle as it affected Milton; it made him defiant, at times even fierce, to those beyond his own inner circle. When he triumphed, he accepted his success without a boast, but not without reproaches for the past. He was crowned; but his coronation came too late, and the death of his wife paralysed his later years.

Let those who from the Clyde to the Isis, from the Forth to the Cam, make it their pastime to sneer at living worth, compare Ben Jonson's lines,

Your praise and dispraise are to me alike,
One does not stroke me, nor the other strike,

with Samuel Johnson's, "It has been delayed till most of those whom I wished to please are sunk into the grave, and success and failure are empty sounds," and then take to heart the following :

The "recent return of popularity greater than ever," which I hear of, seems due alone to that late Edinburgh affair ; especially to the Edinburgh "Address," and affords new proof of the singularly dark and feeble condition of "public judgment" at this time. No idea, or shadow of an idea, is in that Address but what had been set forth by me tens of times before, and the poor gaping sea of prurient blockheadism receives it as a kind of inspired revelation, and runs to buy my books (it is said), now when I have got quite done with their buying or refusing to buy. If they would give me £10,000 a year and bray unanimously their hosannas heaven-high for the rest of my life, who now would there be to get the smallest joy or profit from it ? To me I feel as if it would be a silent sorrow rather, and would bring me painful retrospections, nothing else.

We require no open-sesame, no clumsy confidence from attachés flaunting their intimacy, to assure us that there were "depths of tenderness" in Carlyle. His susceptibility to the softer influences of nature, of family life, of his few chosen friends, is apparent in almost every page of his biography, above all in the *Reminiscences*, those supreme records of regret, remorse, and the inspiration of bereavement. There is no surge of sorrow in our literature like that which is perpetually tossed up in the second chapter of the second volume, with the never-to-be-forgotten refrain—

Cherish what is dearest while you have it near you, and wait not till it is far away. Blind and deaf that we are ; oh, think, if thou yet love anybody living, wait not till death sweep down the paltry little dust clouds and dissonances of the moment, and all be at last so mournfully clear and beautiful, when it is too late !

Were we asked to bring together the three most pathetic sentences in our tongue since Lear asked the question, "And have his daughters brought him to this pass?" we should select Swift's comment on the lock of Stella, "Only a woman's hair;" the cry of Tennyson's Rizpah, "The bones had moved in my side;" and Carlyle's wail, "Oh, that I had you yet but for five minutes beside me, to tell you all." But in answer we hear only the flapping of the folds of Isis, "*strepitumque Acherontis avari.*"

All of sunshine that remained in my life went out in that sudden moment. All of strength too often seems to have gone. . . . Were it permitted, I would pray, but to whom? I can well understand the invocation of saints. One's prayer now has to be voiceless, done with the heart still, but also with the hands still more. . . . Her birthday. She not here—I cannot keep it for her now, and send a gift to poor old Betty, who next to myself remembers her in lifelong love and sacred sorrow. This is all I can do. . . . Time was to bring relief, said everybody; but Time has not to any extent, nor, in truth, did I much wish him.

*Eurydicen vox ipsa et frigida lingua,
Eurydicen toto referebant flumine ripæ.*

Carlyle's pathos, far from being confined to his own calamity, was ready to awake at every touch. "I was walking with him," writes Froude, "one Sunday afternoon in Battersea Park. In the open circle among the trees was a blind man and his daughter, she singing hymns, he accompanying her on some instrument. We stood listening. She sang Faber's 'Pilgrims of the Night.' The words were trivial, but the air, though simple, had something weird and unearthly about it. 'Take me away,' he said, after a few minutes, 'I shall cry if I stay longer.'"

The melancholy, "often as of deep misery frozen tor-

pid," that runs through his writing, that makes him forecast death in life, and paint the springs of nature in winter hue, the "hoarse sea," the "bleared skies," the sunsets "beautiful and brief and wae," compels our compassion in a manner quite different from the pictures of Sterne and De Quincey and other colour dramatists, because we feel it is as genuine as the melancholy of Burns. Both had the relief of humour, but Burns only of the two was capable of gaiety. "Look up there," said Leigh Hunt, pointing to the starry skies, "look at that glorious harmony that sings with infinite voices an eternal song of hope in the soul of man." "Eh, it's a sair sicht," was the reply.

We have referred to a few out of a hundred instances of Carlyle's practical benevolence. To all deserving persons in misfortune he was a good Samaritan, and like all benefactors the dupe of some undeserving. Charity may be, like maternal affection, a form of self-indulgence, but it is so only to kind-hearted men. In all that relates to money Carlyle's career is exemplary. He had too much common-sense to affect to despise it, and was restive when he was underpaid; he knew that the labourer was worthy of his hire. But, after hacking for Brewster he cannot be said to have ever worked for wages; his concern was rather with the quality of his work, and, regardless of results, he always did his best. A more unworldly man never lived; from his first savings he paid ample tributes to filial piety and fraternal kindness, and to the end of his life retained the simple habits in which he had been trained. He hated waste of all kinds, save in words, and carried his home frugalities even to excess. In writing to James Aitken, engaged to his sister, "the Craw," he says, "remember in marriage you have undertaken to do to others as you would wish they should do to you." But this rede he did not reck.

"Carlyle," writes Longfellow, "was one of those men who sacrificed their happiness to their work;" the misfortune is that the sacrifice did not stop with himself. He seemed made to live with no one but himself. Alternately courteous and cross-grained, all his dramatic power went into his creations; he could not put himself into the place of those near him. Essentially perhaps the bravest man of his age, he would turn not an inch aside for threat or flattery; *integer vitæ*, conscience never made him a coward. He bore great calamities with the serenity of a Marcus Aurelius: his reception of the loss of his first volume of the *French Revolution* was worthy of Sidney or of Newton: his letters, when the successive deaths of almost all that were dearest left him desolate, are among the noblest, the most resigned, the most pathetic in biography. Yet, says Mr. Froude, in a judgment which every careful reader must endorse: "Of all men I have ever seen Carlyle was the least patient of the common woes of humanity." "A positive Christian," says Mrs. Carlyle, "in bearing others' pain, he was a roaring Thor when himself pricked by a pin," and his biographer corroborates this: "If matters went well with himself, it never occurred to him that they could be going ill with any one else; and, on the other hand, if he were uncomfortable he required all the world to be uncomfortable along with him." He did his work with more than the tenacity of a Prescott or a Fawcett, but no man ever made so much noise over it as this apostle of silence. "Sins of passion he could forgive, but those of insincerity never." Carlyle has no tinge of insincerity; his writing, his conversation, his life, is absolutely, dangerously transparent. His utter genuineness was in the long run one of the sources of his success. He always, if we allow for a habit of rhetorical exaggeration, felt what he made others feel.

Sullen moods, and "words at random sent," those judging him from a distance can easily condone; the errors of a hot head are pardonable to one who, in his calmer hours, was ready to confess them. "Your temptation and mine," he writes to his brother Alexander, "is a tendency to imperiousness and indignant self-help; and, if no wise theoretical, yet practical forgetfulness and tyrannical contempt of other men." His nicknaming mania was the inheritance of a family failing, always fostered by the mocking-bird at his side. Humour, doubtless, ought to discount many of his criticisms. Dean Stanley, in his funeral sermon, charitably says, that in pronouncing the population of England to be "thirty millions, mostly fools," Carlyle merely meant that "few are chosen and strait is the gate," generously adding—"There was that in him, in spite of his contemptuous descriptions of the people, which endeared him to those who knew him best. The idols of their market-place he trampled underfoot, but their joys and sorrows, their cares and hopes, were to him revered things." Another critic pleads for his discontent that it had in it a noble side, like that of Faust, and that his harsh judgments of eminent men were based on the belief that they had allowed meaner to triumph over higher impulses, or influences of society to injure their moral fibre. This plea, however, fails to cover the whole case. Carlyle's ignorance in treating men who moved in spheres apart from his own, as the leaders of science, definite theological enlightenment, or even poetry and arts was an intellectual rather than a moral flaw; but in the implied assertion, "what I can't do is not worth doing," we have to regret the influence of an enormous egotism stunting enormous powers, which, beginning with his student days, possessed him to the last. The fame of Newton, Leibnitz, Gibbon,

whose works he came to regard as the spoon-meat of his "rude untutored youth," is beyond the range of his or of any shafts. When he trod on Mazzini's pure patriot career, as a "rose-water imbecility," or maligned Mill's intrepid thought as that of a mere machine, he was astray on more delicate ground, and alienated some of his truest friends. Among the many curses of our nineteenth-century literature denounced by its leading Censor, the worst, the want of loyalty among literary men, he fails to denounce because he largely shares in it. "No sadder proof," he declares, "can be given by a man of his own littleness than disbelief in great men," and no one has done more to retrieve from misconception the memories of heroes of the past; but rarely do either he or Mrs. Carlyle say a good word for any considerable English writer then living. It is true that he criticises, more or less disparagingly, all his own works, from *Sartor*, of which he remarks that "only some ten pages are fused and harmonious," to his self-entitled "rigmarole on the Norse Kings:" but he would not let his enemy say so; nor his friend. Mill's just strictures on the "Nigger Pamphlet" he treats as the impertinence of a boy, and only to Emerson would he grant the privilege to hold his own. *Per contra*, he overestimated those who were content to be his echoes. Material help he refused with a red Indian pride; intellectual he used and slighted. He renders scant justice to those who had preceded him in his lines of historical investigation, as if they had been poachers on his premises, *e.g.* Heath, the royalist writer of the Commonwealth time, is "carrion Heath:" Noble, a former biographer of Cromwell, is "my reverend imbecile friend:" his predecessors in *Friedrich*, as Schlosser, Preuss, Ranke, Förster, Vehse, are "dark chaotic dullards whose books are mere blotches of printed stupor,

tumbled mountains of marine stores"—criticism valueless even when it raises the laughter due to a pantomime. Carlyle assailed three sets of people :

1. Real humbugs, or those who had behaved, or whom he believed to have behaved, badly to him.
2. Persons from whom he differed, or whom he could not understand—as Shelley, Keats, Lamb, Coleridge, and the leaders of Physics and Metaphysics.
3. Persons who had befriended, but would not give him an unrestricted homage or an implicit following, as Mill, Mazzini, Miss Martineau, etc.

The last series of assaults are hard to pardon. Had his strictures been always just, so winged with humorous epigram, they would have blasted a score of reputations: as it is they have only served to mar his own. He was a typical Scotch student of the better class, stung by the *οἷστρος* of their ambitious competition and restless push, wanting in repose, never like

a gentleman at ease
With moral breadth of temperament,

too apt to note his superiority with the sneer, "they call this man as good as me." Bacon, in one of his finest antitheses, draws a contrast between the love of Excellence and the love of Excelling. Carlyle is possessed by both; he had none of the exaggerated caution which in others of his race is apt to degenerate into moral cowardice: but when he thought himself trod on he became, to use his own figure, "a rattlesnake," and put out fangs like those of the griffins curiously, if not sardonically, carved on the tombs of his family in the church-yard of Ecclefechan.

Truth, in the sense of saying what he thought, was one of his ruling passions. To one of his brothers on the birth of a daughter, he writes, "Train her to this, as the cornerstone of all morality, to stand by the truth, to abhor a lie as she does hell-fire." The "gates of hell" is the phrase of Achilles; but Carlyle has no real point of contact with the Greek love of abstract truth. He objects that "Socrates is terribly at ease in Zion:" he liked no one to be at ease anywhere. He is angry with Walter Scott because he hunted with his friends over the breezy heath instead of mooning alone over twilight moors. Read Scott's *Memoirs* in the morning, the *Reminiscences* at night, and dispute if you like about the greater genius, but never about the healthier, better, and larger man.

Hebraism, says Matthew Arnold, is the spirit which obeys the mandate, "walk by your light." Hellenism the spirit which remembers the other, "have a care your light be not darkness;" the former prefers doing to thinking, the latter is bent on finding the truth it loves. Carlyle is a Hebraist unrelieved and unretrieved by the Hellene. A man of inconsistencies, egotisms, Alpine grandeurs, and crevasses, let us take from him what the gods or proto-plasms have allowed. His way of life,¹ duly admired, for

¹ In the *Times* of February 7th, 1881, there appeared an interesting account of Carlyle's daily routine. "No book hack could have surpassed the regularity and industry with which he worked early and late in his small attic. A walk before breakfast was part of the day's duties. At ten o'clock in the morning, whether the spirit moved him or not, he took up his pen and laboured hard until three o'clock. Nothing, not even the opening of the morning letters, was allowed to distract him. Then came walking, answering letters, and seeing friends. . . . In the evening he read and prepared for the work of the morrow."

its stern temperance, its rigidity of noble aim — eighty years spent in contempt of favour, plaudit, or reward, left him austere to frailty other than his own, and wrapt him in the repellent isolation which is the wrong side of uncompromising dignity. He was too great to be, in the common sense, conceited. All his consciousness of power left him with the feeling of Newton, "I am a child gathering shells on the shore:" but what sense he had of fallibility arose from his glimpse of the infinite sea, never from any suspicion that, in any circumstances, he might be wrong and another mortal right: Shelley's lines on Byron:

The sense that he was greater than his kind
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light—

fit him, like Ruskin's verdict, "What can you say of Carlyle but that he was born in the clouds and struck by the lightning," which withers while it immortalises.

CHAPTER VIII.

CARLYLE AS MAN OF LETTERS, CRITIC, AND HISTORIAN.

CARLYLE was so essentially a Preacher that the choice of a profession made for him by his parents was in some measure justified; but he was also a keen Critic, unnameable to ecclesiastic or other rule, a leader of the revolutionary spirit of the age, even while protesting against its extremes: above all, he was a literary Artist. Various opinions will continue to be held as to the value of his sermons; the excellence of his best workmanship is universally acknowledged. He was endowed with few of the qualities which secure a quick success—fluency, finish of style, the art of giving graceful utterance to current thought; he had in full measure the stronger if slower powers—sound knowledge, infinite industry, and the sympathetic insight of penetrative imagination—that ultimately hold the fastnesses of fame. His habit of startling his hearers, which for a time restricted, at a later date widened their circle. There is much, sometimes even tiresome, repetition in Carlyle's work; the range of his ideas is limited; he plays on a few strings with wonderfully versatile variations; in reading his later we are continually confronted with the "old familiar faces" of his earlier essays. But, after the perfunctory work for Brewster, he wrote

nothing wholly commonplace; occasionally paradoxical to the verge of absurdity, he is never dull.

Setting aside his TRANSLATIONS, always in prose, often in verse, masterpieces of their kind, he made his first mark in CRITICISM, which may be regarded as a higher kind of translation: the great value of his work in this direction is due to his so regarding it. Most criticism has for its aim to show off the critic; good criticism interprets the author. Fifty years ago, in allusion to methods of reviewing, not even now wholly obsolete, Carlyle wrote:

The first and most convenient is for the reviewer to perch himself resolutely, as it were, on the shoulder of his author, and therefrom to show as if he commanded him and looked down upon him by natural superiority of stature. Whatsoever the great man says or does the little man shall treat with an air of knowingness and light condescending mockery, professing with much covert sarcasm that this or that is beyond *his* comprehension, and cunningly asking his readers if *they* comprehend it.

There is here, perhaps, some "covert sarcasm" directed against contemporaries who forgot that their mission was to pronounce on the merits of the books reviewed, and not to patronise their authors; it may be set beside the objection to Jeffrey's fashion of saying, "I like this; I do not like that," without giving the reason why. But in this instance the writer did reckon his own rede. The temptation of a smart critic is to seek or select legitimate or illegitimate objects of attack; and that Carlyle was well armed with the shafts of ridicule is apparent in his essays as in his histories; superabundantly so in his letters and conversation. His examination of the *German Playwrights*, of *Taylor's German Literature*, and his inimitable sketch of Herr Döring, the hapless biographer of Richter, are as

amusing as Macaulay's *coup-de-grâce* to Robert Montgomery. But the graver critic would have us take to heart these sentences of his essay on Voltaire:¹

Far be it from us to say that solemnity is an essential of greatness; that no great man can have other than a rigid vinegar aspect of countenance, never to be thawed or warmed by billows of mirth. There are things in this world to be laughed at as well as things to be admired. Nevertheless, contempt is a dangerous element to sport in; a deadly one if we habitually live in it. The faculty of love, of admiration, is to be regarded as a sign and the measure of high souls; unwisely directed, it leads to many evils; but without it, there cannot be any good. Ridicule, on the other hand, is the smallest of all faculties that other men are at pains to repay with any esteem. . . . Its nourishment and essence is denial, which hovers only on the surface, while knowledge dwells far below, . . . it cherishes nothing but our vanity, which may in general be left safely enough to shift for itself.

We may compare with this one of the writer's numerous warnings to young men taking to literature, as to drinking, in despair of anything better to do, ending with the exhortation, "Witty above all things, oh, be not witty;" or turn to the passage in the review of Sir Walter Scott:

Is it with ease or not with ease that a man shall do his best in any shape; above all, in this shape justly named of soul's travail, working in the deep places of thought? . . . Not so now nor at any time. . . . Virgil and Tacitus, were they ready writers? The whole *Prophecies of Isaiah* are not equal in extent to this cobweb of a Review article. Shakespeare, we may fancy, wrote with rapidity, but

¹ As an estimate of Voltaire this brilliant essay is inadequate. Carlyle's maxim, we want to be told "not what is *not* true, but what *is* true," prevented him from appreciating the great work of the Encyclopædists.

not till he had thought with intensity, . . . no easy writer he. Neither was Milton one of the mob of gentlemen that write with ease. Goethe tells us he "had nothing sent to him in his sleep," no page of his but he knew well how it came there. Schiller—"konnte nie fertig werden"—never could get done. Dante sees himself "growing lean" over his *Divine Comedy*; in stern solitary death wrestle with it, to prevail over it and do it, if his uttermost faculty may; hence, too, it is done and prevailed over, and the fiery life of it endures for evermore among men. No; creation, one would think, cannot be easy; your Jove has severe pains and fire flames in the head, out of which an armed Pallas is struggling! As for manufacture, that is a different matter. . . . Write by steam if thou canst contrive it and sell it, but hide it like virtue.

In these and frequent similar passages lies the secret of Carlyle's slow recognition, long struggle, and ultimate success; also of his occasional critical intolerance. Commander-in-chief of the "red artillery," he sets too little store on the graceful yet sometimes decisive charges of the light brigades of literature. He feels nothing but contempt for the banter of men like Jerrold; despises the genial pathos of Lamb; and salutes the most brilliant wit and exquisite lyrist of our century with the Puritanical comment, "Blackguard Heine." He deified work as he deified strength; and so often stimulated his imitators to attempt to leap beyond their shadows. Hard work will not do everything: a man can only accomplish what he was born fit for. Many, in the first flush of ambition doomed to wreck, are blind to the fact that it is not in every ploughman to be a poet, nor in every prize-student to be a philosopher. Nature does half: after all, perhaps the larger half. Genius has been absurdly defined as "an infinite capacity for taking trouble;" no amount of pumping can draw more water than is in the well. Himself in "the chamber of little ease," Carlyle travestied Goethe's

“worship of sorrow” till it became a pride in pain. He forgot that rude energy requires restraint. Hercules Furiosus and Orlando Furioso did more than cut down trees; they tore them up; but to no useful end. His power is often almost Miltonic; it is never Shakespearian; and his insistent earnestness would run the risk of fatiguing us were it not redeemed by his humour. But he errs on the better side; and his example is a salutary counteractive in an age when the dust of so many skirmishers obscures the air, and laughter is too readily accepted as the test of truth. His stern conception of literature accounts for his exaltations of the ideal, and denunciations of the actual, profession of letters in passages which, from his habit of emphasising opposite sides of truth, instead of striking a balance, appear almost side by side in contradiction. The following condenses the ideal:

If the poor and humble toil that we have food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he may have guidance, freedom, immortality. These two in all degrees I honour; all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth. Doubt, desire, sorrow, remorse, indignation, despair itself—all these like hell-hounds lie beleaguering the souls of the poor day worker as of every man; but he bends himself with free valour against his task, and all these are stifled—all these shrink murmuring far off in their caves.

Against this we have to set innumerable tirades on the crime of worthless writing, *e.g.*:

No mortal has a right to wag his tongue, much less to wag his pen, without saying something; he knows not what mischief he does, past computation, scattering words without meaning, to afflict the whole world yet before they cease. For thistle-down flies abroad on all winds and airs of wind. . . . Ship-loads of fashionable novels, sentimental rhymes, tragedies, farces . . . tales by flood and field are swal-

lowed monthly into the bottomless pool; still does the press toil, . . . and still in torrents rushes on the great army of publications to their final home; and still oblivion, like the grave, cries Give! give! How is it that of all these countless multitudes no one can . . . produce aught that shall endure longer than "snow-flake on the river? Because they are foam, because there is no reality in them. . . ." Not by printing-ink alone does man live. Literature, as followed at present, is but a species of brewing or cooking, where the cooks use poison, and vend it by telling innumerable lies.

These passages owe their interest to the attestation of their sincerity by the writer's own practice. "Do not," he counsels one of his unknown correspondents, "take up a subject because it is singular and will get you credit, but because you *love* it," and he himself acted on the rule. Nothing more impresses the student of Carlyle's works than his *thoroughness*. He never took a task in hand without the determination to perform it to the utmost of his ability; consequently when he satisfied himself that he was master of his subject he satisfied his readers; but this mastery was only attained, as it is only attainable, by the most rigorous research. He seems to have written down his results with considerable fluency; the molten ore flowed freely forth, but the process of smelting was arduous. The most painful part of literary work is not the actual composition, but the accumulation of details, the wearisome compilation of facts, weighing of previous criticisms, the sifting of the grains of wheat from the bushels of chaff. This part of his task Carlyle performed with an admirable conscientiousness. His numerous letters applying for out-of-the-way books to buy or borrow, for every pamphlet throwing light on his subject, bear testimony to the careful exactitude which rarely permitted him to leave any record unread or any worthy opinion untested about any event

of which or any person of whom he undertook to write. From Templand (1833) he applies for seven volumes of Beaumarchais, three of Bassompierre, the Memoirs of Abbé Georgel, and every attainable account of Cagliostro and* the Countess de la Motte, to fuse into *The Diamond Necklace*. To write the essay on *Werner* and the *German Playwrights* he swam through seas of trash. He digested the whole of *Diderot* for one review article. He seems to have read through *Jean Paul Richter*, a feat to accomplish which Germans require a special dictionary. When engaged on the Civil War he routed up a whole shoal of obscure seventeenth-century papers from Yarmouth, the remnant of a yet larger heap, "read hundred-weights of dreary books," and endured "a hundred Museum headaches." In grappling with *Friedrich* he waded through so many gray historians that we can forgive his sweeping condemnation of their dullness. He visited all the scenes and places of which he meant to speak, from St. Ives to Prague, and explored the battle-fields. Work done after this fashion seldom brings a swift return; but if it is utilized and made vivid by literary genius it has a claim to permanence. Bating a few instances where his sense of proportion is defective, or his eccentricity is in excess, Carlyle puts his ample material to artistic use; seldom making ostentation of detail, but skilfully concentrating, so that we read easily and readily recall what he has written. Almost everything he has done has made a mark; his best work in criticism is final, it does not require to be done again. He interests us in the fortunes of his leading characters; *first*, because he feels with them; *secondly*, because he knows how to distinguish the essence from the accidents of their lives, what to forget and what to remember, where to begin and where to stop. Hence, not only his set biog-

raphies, as of Schiller and of Sterling, but the shorter notices in his Essays, are intrinsically more complete and throw more real light on character than whole volumes of ordinary memoirs.

With the limitations above referred to, and in view of his antecedents, the range of Carlyle's critical appreciation is wonderfully wide. Often perversely unfair to the majority of his English contemporaries, the scales seem to fall from his eyes in dealing with the great figures of other nations. The charity expressed in the saying that we should judge men, not by the number of their faults, but by the amount of their deflection from the circle, great or small, that bounds their being, enables him often to do justice to those most widely differing in creed, sentiment, and lines of activity from each other and from himself. When treating congenial themes he errs by overestimate rather than by depreciation: among the qualities of his early work, which afterwards suffered some eclipse in the growth of other powers, is its flexibility. It was natural for Carlyle, his successor in genius in the Scotch lowlands, to give an account of Robert Burns which throws all previous criticism of the poet into the shade. Similarly he has strong affinities to Johnson, Luther, Knox, Cromwell, to all his so-called heroes; but he is fair to the characters, if not always to the works, of Voltaire and Diderot, slurs over or makes humorous the escapades of Mirabeau, is undeterred by the mysticism of Novalis, and in the fervour of his worship fails to see the gulf between himself and Goethe.

Carlyle's *Essays* mark an epoch, *i.e.*, the beginning of a new era, in the history of British criticism. The able and vigorous writers who contributed to the early numbers of the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* successfully applied their taste and judgment to such works as fell within

their sphere, and could be fairly tested by their canons; but they passed an alien act on everything that lay beyond the range of their insular view. In dealing with the efforts of a nation whose literature, the most recent in Europe save that of Russia, had only begun to command recognition, their rules were at fault and their failures ridiculous. If the old formulæ have been theoretically dismissed, and a conscientious critic now endeavours to place himself in the position of his author, the change is largely due to the influence of Carlyle's *Miscellanies*. Previous to their appearance, the literature of Germany, to which half of these papers are devoted, had been (with the exception of Sir Walter Scott's translation of *Goetz von Berlichingen*, De Quincey's travesties, and Taylor's renderings from Lessing) a sealed book to English readers, save those who were willing to breathe in an atmosphere of Coleridgean mist. Carlyle first made it generally known in England, because he was the first fully to apprehend its meaning. The *Life of Schiller*, which the author himself depreciated, remains one of the best of comparatively short biographies; it abounds in admirable passages (conspicuously the contrast between the elder and the younger of the Dioscuri at Weimar), and has the advantage to some readers of being written in classical English prose.

To the essays relating to Germany, which we may accept as the *disjecta membra* of the author's unpublished History, there is little to add. In these volumes we have the best English account of the Nibelungen Lied—the most graphic and in the main most just analyses of the genius of Heyne, Richter, Novalis, Schiller, and, above all, of Goethe, who is recorded to have said, "Carlyle is almost more at home in our literature than ourselves." With the Germans he is on his chosen ground; but the range of his

sympathies is most apparent in the portrait-gallery of eighteenth-century Frenchmen that forms, as it were, a proscenium to his first great History. Among other papers in the same collection the most prominent are the *Signs of the Times* and *Characteristics*, in which he first distinctly broaches some of his peculiar views on political philosophy and life.

The scope and some of the limitations of Carlyle's critical power are exhibited in his second Series¹ of Lectures, delivered in 1838, when (*æt.* 43) he had reached the maturity of his powers. The first three of these lectures, treating of Ancient History and Literature, bring into strong relief the speaker's inadequate view of Greek thought and civilisation :

Greek transactions had never anything alive, no result for us, they were dead entirely . . . all left is a few ruined towers, masses of stone, and broken statuary. . . . The writings of Socrates are made up of a few wire-drawn notions about virtue; there is no conclusion, no word of life in him.

These and similar dogmatic utterances are comments of the Hebrew on the Hellene. To the Romans, "the men of antiquity," he is more just, dwelling on their agriculture and road-making as their "greatest work written on the planet;" but the only Latin author he thoroughly appreci-

¹ Though a mere reproduction of the notes of Mr. Chisholm Anstley, this posthumous publication is justified by its interest and obvious authenticity. The appearance in a prominent periodical (while these sheets are passing through the press) of *Wotton Reinfred* is more open to question. This fragment of a romance, partly based on the plan of *Wilhelm Meister*, with shadowy love episodes recalling the manner of the "Minerva press," can add nothing to Carlyle's reputation.

ates is Tacitus, "a Colossus on edge of dark night." Then follows an exaltation of the Middle Ages, as those in which "we see belief getting the victory over unbelief," in a strain suitable to Cardinal Newman's *Grammar of Assent*. In the struggle between the Popes and the Hohenstaufens, Carlyle's whole sympathy is with Gregory and Hildebrand. He refers to the surrender at Canossa with the characteristic comment, "the clay that is about man is always sufficiently ready to assert its rights; the danger is always the other way, that the spiritual part of man will become overlaid with the bodily part." In the same vein is his praise of Peter the Hermit, whose motto was not the "action, action" of Demosthenes, but "belief, belief." In the brief space of those suggestive though unequal discourses the speaker allows awkward proximity to some of the self-contradictions which, even when scattered farther apart, perplex his readers, and render it impossible to credit his philosophy with more than a few strains of consistent thought.

In one page "the judgments of the heart¹ are of more value than those of the head." In the next "morals in a man are the counterpart of the intellect that is in it." The Middle Ages were "a healthy age," and therefore there was next to no Literature. "The strong warrior disdained to write." "Actions will be preserved when all writers are forgotten." Two days later, apropos of Dante, he says, "The great thing which any nation can do is to produce great men. . . . When the Vatican shall have crumbled to dust, and St. Peter's and Strassburg Minster be no more; for thousands of years to come Catholicism will survive in this sublime relic of antiquity—the *Divina Commedia*."

¹ It has been suggested that Carlyle may have been in this instance a student of Vauvenargues, who in the early years of the much-maligned eighteenth century wrote "Les grandes pensées viennent du cœur."

Passing to Spain, Carlyle salutes Cervantes and the Cid, —calling Don Quixote the “poetry of comedy,” “the age of gold in self-mockery”—pays a more reserved tribute to Calderon, ventures on the assertion that Cortes was “as great as Alexander,” and gives a sketch, so graphic that it might serve as a text for Motley’s great work, of the way in which the decayed Iberian chivalry, rotten through with the Inquisition, broke itself on the Dutch dykes. After a brief outline of the rise of the German power, which had three avatars—the overwhelming of Rome, the Swiss resistance to Austria, and the Reformation—we have a rough estimate of some of the Reformers. Luther is exalted even over Knox; Erasmus is depreciated, while Calvin and Melancthon are passed by.

The chapter on the Saxons, in which the writer’s love of the sea appears in picturesque reference to the old rover kings, is followed by unusually commonplace remarks on earlier English literature, interspersed with some of Carlyle’s refrains:

The mind is one, and consists not of bundles of faculties at all . . . the same features appear in painting, singing, fighting . . . when I hear of the distinction between the poet and the thinker, I really see no difference at all. “Bacon sees, Shakespeare sees through,” “Milton is altogether sectarian—a Presbyterian one might say—he got his knowledge out of Knox,” “Eve is a cold statue.”

Coming to the well belaboured eighteenth century—when much was done of which the nineteenth talks, and massive books were written that we are content to criticise—we have the inevitable denunciations of scepticism, materialism, argumentation, logic; the quotation (referred to a motto in the Swiss gardens), “Speech is silvern, silence

is golden," and a loud assertion that all great things are silent. The age is commended for Watt's steam-engine, Arkwright's spinning-jenny, and Whitfield's preaching, but its policies and theories are alike belittled. The summaries of the leading writers are interesting, some curious, and a few absurd. On the threshold of the age Dryden is noted as "a great poet born in the worst of times:" Addison as "an instance of one formal man doing great things:" Swift is pronounced "by far the greatest man of that time, not unfeeling," who "carried sarcasm to an epic pitch:" Pope, we are told, had "one of the finest heads ever known." Sterne is handled with a tenderness that contrasts with the death sentence pronounced on him by Thackeray, "much is forgiven him because he loved much, . . . a good, simple being after all." Johnson the "much enduring," is treated as in the *Heroes* and the *Essay*. Hume, with "a far duller kind of sense," is commended for "noble perseverance and Stoic endurance of failure; but his eye was not open to faith," etc. On which follows a stupendous criticism of Gibbon, whom Carlyle, returning to his earlier and juster view, ended by admiring:

With all his swagger and bombast, no man ever gave a more futile account of human things than he has done of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

The sketch of the Pre-Revolution period is slight, and marked by a somewhat shallow reference to Rousseau. The last lecture on the recent German writers is a mere *réchauffé* of the *Essays*. Carlyle closes with the famous passage from Richter, one of those which indicate the influence in style as in thought of the German over the Scotch humourist. "It is now the twelfth hour of the night, birds of darkness are on the wing, the spectres uprear, the dead walk, the

living dream. Thou, Eternal Providence, wilt cause the day to dawn." The whole volume is a testimony to the speaker's power of speech, to his often unsurpassed penetration, and to the hopeless variance of the often rapidly shifting streams of his thought.

Detailed criticism of Carlyle's *HISTORIES* belongs to the sphere of separate disquisitions. Here it is only possible to take note of their general characteristics. His conception of what history should be is shared with Macaulay. Both writers protest against its being made a mere record of "court and camp," of royal intrigue and state rivalry, of pageants of procession, or chivalric encounters. Both find the sources of these outwardly obtrusive events in the underground current of national sentiment, the conditions of the civilisation from which they were evolved, the prosperity or misery of the masses of the people.

The essence of history does not lie in laws, senate-houses, or battle-fields, but in the tide of thought and action—the world of existence that in gloom and brightness blossoms and fades apart from these.

But Carlyle differs from Macaulay in his passion for the concrete. The latter presents us with pictures to illustrate his political theory; the former leaves his pictures to speak for themselves. "Give him a fact," says Emerson, "he loaded you with thanks; a theory, with ridicule or even abuse." It has been said that with Carlyle History was philosophy teaching by examples. He himself defines it as "the essence of innumerable biographies." He individualises everything he meets; his dislike of abstractions is everywhere extreme. Thus, while other writers have expanded biography into history, Carlyle condenses history into biography. Even most biographies are too vague for

him. He delights in Boswell: he glides over their generalisations to pick out some previously obscure record from Clarendon or Hume. Even in the *French Revolution*, where the author has mainly to deal with masses in tumult, he gives most prominence to their leaders. They march past us, labelled with strange names, in the foreground of the scene, on which is being enacted the death wrestle of old Feudalism and young Democracy. This book is unique among modern histories for a combination of force and insight only rivalled by the most incisive passages of the seventh book of Thucydides, of Tacitus, of Gibbon, and of Michelet.¹

The *French Revolution* is open to the charge of being a comment and a prophecy rather than a narrative: the reader's knowledge of the main events of the period is too much assumed for the purpose of a school-book. Even Dryasdust will turn when trod on, and this book has been a happy hunting-field to aggressive antiquarians, to whom the mistake of a day in date, the omission or insertion of a letter in a name, is of more moment than the difference between vitalising or petrifying an era. The lumber merchants of history are the born foes of historians who, like Carlyle and Mr. Froude, have manifested their dramatic power of making the past present and the distant near. That the excess of this power is not always compatible with perfect impartiality may be admitted; for a poetic capacity is generally attended by heats of enthusiasm, and is liable to errors of detail; but without some share of it:

Die Zeiten der Vergangenheit
Sind uns ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln.

¹ *Vide* a comparison of Carlyle and Michelet in Dr. Oswald's interesting and suggestive little volume of criticism and selection, *Thomas Carlyle, ein Lebensbild und Goldkörner aus seinen Werken*.

Mere research, the unearthing and arrangement of what Sir Philip Sidney calls "old moth-eaten records," supplies material for the work of the historian proper; and, occasionally to good purpose, corrects it, but, as a rule, with too much flourish. Applying this minute criticism to the *French Revolution*, one reviewer has found that the author has given the wrong number to a regiment: another esteemed scholar has discovered that there are seven errors in the famous account of the flight to Varennes, to wit: the delay in the departure was due to Bouillé, not to the Queen; she did not lose her way and so delay the start; Ste. Menehould is too big to be called a village; on the arrest, it was the Queen, not the King, who asked for hot water and eggs; the coach went rather faster than is stated; and, above all, *infandum!* it was not painted yellow, but green and black. This criticism does not in any degree detract from the value of one of the most vivid and substantially accurate narratives in the range of European literature. Carlyle's object was to convey the soul of the Revolution, not to register its upholstery. The annalist, be he Dryasdust or gossip, is, in legal phrase, "the devil" of the prose artist, whose work makes almost as great a demand on the imaginative faculty as that of the poet. Historiography is related to History as the Chronicles of Hollinshed and the Voyages of Hakluyt to the Plays of Shakespeare, plays which Marlborough confessed to have been the main source of his knowledge of English history. Some men are born philologists or antiquarians; but, as the former often fail to see the books because of the words, the latter cannot read the story for the dates. The mass of readers require precisely what has been contemptuously referred to as the "Romance of History," provided it leaves with them an accurate impression, as well as an in-

spiring interest. Save in his over-hasty acceptance of the French *blague* version of "The Sinking of the Vengeur," Carlyle has never laid himself open to the reproach of essential inaccuracy. As far as possible for a man of genius, he was a devotee of facts. He is never a careless, though occasionally an impetuous writer; his graver errors are those of emotional misinterpretation. It has been observed that, while condemning Robespierre, he has extenuated the guilt of Danton as one of the main authors of the September massacres, and, more generally, that "his quickness and brilliancy made him impatient of systematic thought." But his histories remain the best illuminations of fact in our language. The *French Revolution* is a series of flame-pictures; every page is on fire; we read the whole as if listening to successive volleys of artillery; nowhere has such a motley mass been endowed with equal life. This book alone vindicates Lowell's panegyric: "the figures of most historians seem like dolls stuffed with bran, whose whole substance runs through any hole that criticism may tear in them; but Carlyle's are so real that if you prick them they bleed."

When Carlyle generalises, as in the introductions to his Essays, he is apt to thrust his own views on his subject and on his readers; but, unlike De Quincey, who had a like love of excursus, he comes to the point before the close. The one claimed the privilege, assumed by Coleridge, of starting from no premises and arriving at no conclusion; the other, in his capacity as a critic, arrives at a conclusion, though sometimes from questionable premises. It is characteristic of his habit of concentrating, rather than condensing, that Carlyle abandoned his design of a history of the Civil Wars for *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*. The events of the period, whose issues the writer

has firmly grasped, are brought into prominence mainly as they elucidate the career of his hero; but the "elucidations" have been accepted, with a few reservations, as final. No single work has gone so far to reverse a traditional estimate. The old current conceptions of the Protector are refuted out of his own mouth; but it was left for his editor to restore life to the half-forgotten records, and sweep away the clouds that obscured their revelations of a great though rugged character. *Cromwell* has been generally accepted in Scotland as Carlyle's masterpiece—a judgment due to the fact of its being, among the author's mature works, the least apparently opposed to the theological views prevalent in the north of our island. In reality—though containing some of his finest descriptions and battle-pieces, conspicuously that of "Dunbar"—it is the least artistic of his achievements, being overladen with detail and superabounding in extract. A good critic¹ has said that it was a labour of love, like Spedding's *Bacon*; but that the correspondence, lavishly reproduced in both works, has "some of the defects of lovers' letters to those to whom they are not addressed." Carlyle has established that Oliver was not a hypocrite, "not a man of falsehood, but a man of truth:" he has thrown doubts on his being a fanatic; but he has left it open to M. Guizot to establish that his later rule was a practical despotism.

In *Friedrich II.* he undertook a yet greater task; and his work stretching over a wide arena, is, of necessity, more of a history, less of a biography, than any of his others. In constructing and composing it he was oppressed not only by the magnitude and complexity of his theme, but, for the first time, by hesitations as to his choice of a

¹ In *St. James Gazette*, February 11th, 1881.

hero. He himself confessed, "I never was admitted much to *Friedrich's* confidence, and I never cared very much about him." Yet he determined, almost of malice prepense, to exalt the narrow though vivid Prussian as "the last of the kings, the one genuine figure in the eighteenth century," and though failing to prove his case, he has, like a loyal lawyer, made the best of his brief. The book embodies and conveys the most brilliant and the most readable account of a great part of the century, and nothing he has written bears such ample testimony to the writer's pictorial genius. It is sometimes garrulous with the fluency of an old man eloquent; parts of the third volume, with its diffuse extracts from the king's survey of his realm, is hard if not weary reading; but the rest is a masterpiece of historic restoration. The introductory portion, leading us through one of the most tangled woods of genealogy and political adjustment, is relieved from tedium by the procession of the half-forgotten host of German worthies—St. Adalbert and his mission; old Barbarossa; Leopold's mystery; Conrad and St. Elizabeth; Ptolemy Alphonso; Otto with the arrow; Margaret with the mouth; Sigismund *supra grammaticam*; Augustus the physically strong; Albert Achilles and Albert Alcibiades; Anne of Cleves; Mr. John Kepler—who move on the pages, more brightly "pictured" than those of Livy, like marionettes inspired with life. In the main body of the book the men and women of the Prussian court are brought before us in fuller light and shade. Friedrich himself, at Sans Souci, with his cocked-hat, walking-stick, and wonderful gray eyes; Sophia Charlotte's grace, wit, and music; Wilhelmina and her book; the old Hyperborean; the black artists Seckendorf and Grumkow; George I. and his blue-beard chamber; the little drummer; the Old Dessauer; the cabinet

Venus; Grävenitz Hecate; Algarotti; Goetz in his tower; the tragedy of Katte; the immeasurable comedy of Mau-pertuis, the flattener of the earth, and Voltaire—all these and a hundred more are summoned by a wizard's wand from the land of shadows, to march by the central figures of these volumes; to dance, flutter, love, hate, intrigue, and die before our eyes. It is the largest and most varied show-box in all history; a prelude to a series of battle-pieces—Rossbach, Luthen, Molwitz, Zorndorf—nowhere else, save in the author's own pages, approached in prose, and rarely rivalled out of Homer's verse.

Carlyle's style, in the chiaro-oscuro of which his Histories and three-fourths of his Essays are set, has naturally provoked much criticism and some objurgation. M. Taine says it is "exaggerated and demoniacal." Hallam¹ could not read the *French Revolution* because of its "detestable" style, and Wordsworth, whose own prose was perfectly limpid, is reported to have said, "No Scotchman can write English. C—— is a pest to the language." Carlyle's style is not that of Addison, of Berkeley, or of Helps; its peculiarities are due to the eccentricity of an always eccentric being; but it is neither affected nor deliberately imitated. It has been plausibly asserted that his earlier manner of writing, as in *Schiller*, under the influence of Jeffrey, was not in his natural voice. "They forget," he said, referring to his critics, "that the style is the skin of the writer, not a coat: and the public is an old woman." Erratic, metaphorical, elliptical to excess, and therefore a dangerous model, "the mature oaken Carlylese style," with its freaks, "nodosities, and angularities," is as

¹ Carlyle with equal unfairness disparaged Hallam's *Literature of Europe* (containing among other fine criticisms the splendid summary of "Lear") as a valley of dry bones.

set and engrained in his nature as the *Birthmark* in Hawthorne's romance. To recast a chapter of the *Revolution* in the form of a chapter of Macaulay would be like re-writing Tacitus in the form of Cicero, or Browning in the form of Pope. Carlyle is seldom obscure, the energy of his manner is part of his matter; its abruptness corresponds to the abruptness of his thought, which proceeds often as it were by a series of electric shocks, that threaten to break through the formal restraints of an ordinary sentence. He writes like one who must, under the spell of his own winged words; at all hazards, determined to convey his meaning; willing, like Montaigne, to "despise no phrase of those that run in the streets," to speak in strange tongues, and even to coin new words for the expression of a new emotion. It is his fashion to care as little for rounded phrase as for logical argument: and he rather convinces and persuades by calling up a succession of feelings than by a train of reasoning. He repeats himself like a preacher, instead of condensing like an essayist. The American Thoreau writes in the course of an incisive survey:

Carlyle's . . . mastery over the language is unrivalled; it is with him a keen, resistless weapon; his power of words is endless. All nature, human and external, is ransacked to serve and run his errands. The bright cutlery, after all the dross of Birmingham has been thrown aside, is his style. . . . He has broken the ice, and the torrent streams forth. He drives six-in-hand over ruts and streams and never upsets. . . . With wonderful art he grinds into paint for his picture all his moods and experiences, and crashes his way through shoals of dilettante opinions. It is not in man to determine what his style shall be, if it is to be his own.

But though a rugged, Carlyle was the reverse of a careless or ready writer. He weighed every sentence: if in all

his works, from *Sartor* to the *Reminiscences*, you pencil-mark the most suggestive passages you disfigure the whole book. His opinions will continue to be tossed to and fro; but as an artist he continually grows. He was, let us grant, though a powerful, a one-sided historian, a twisted though in some aspects a great moralist; but he was, in every sense, a mighty painter, now dipping his pencil "in the hues of earthquake and eclipse," now etching his scenes with the tender touch of a Millet.

Emerson, in one of his early letters to Carlyle, wrote, "Nothing seems hid from those wonderful eyes of yours; those devouring eyes; those thirsty eyes; those portrait-eating, portrait-painting eyes of thine." Men of genius, whether expressing themselves in prose or verse, on canvas or in harmony, are, save when smitten, like Beethoven, by some malignity of Nature, endowed with keener physical senses than other men. They actually, not metaphorically, see more and hear more than their fellows. Carlyle's super-sensitive ear was to him, through life, mainly a torment; but the intensity of his vision was that of a born artist, and to it we owe the finest descriptive passages, if we except those of Mr. Ruskin, in English prose. None of our poets, from Chaucer and Dunbar to Burns and Tennyson, have been more alive to the influences of external nature. His early letters abound in passages like the following, on the view from Arthur's Seat:

The blue, majestic, everlasting ocean, with the Fife hills swelling gradually into the Grampians behind; rough crags and rude precipices at our feet (where not a hillock rears its head unsung) with Edinburgh at their base clustering proudly over her rugged foundations and covering with a vapoury mantle the jagged black masses of stonework that stretch far and wide, and show like a city of Faeryland. . . . I saw it all last evening when the sun was going down,

and the moon's fine crescent, like a pretty silver creature as it is, was riding quietly above me.

Compare with this the picture, in a letter to Sterling, of Middlebie burn, "leaping into its caldron, singing a song better than Pasta's;" or that of the Scaur Water, that may be compared with Tennyson's verses in the valley of Caunterets; or the sketches of the Flemish cities in the tour of 1842, with the photograph of the lace-girl, recalling Sterne at his purest; or the account of the "atmosphere like silk" over the moor, with the phrase, "it was as if Pan slept;" or the few lines written at Thurso, where "the sea is always one's friend;" or the later memories of Mentone, old and new, in the *Reminiscences* (vol. ii. pp. 335-340).

The most striking of those descriptions are, however, those in which the interests of some thrilling event or crisis of human life or history steal upon the scene, and give it a further meaning, as in the dim streak of dawn rising over St. Abbs Head on the morning of Dunbar, or in the following famous apostrophe:

O evening sun of July, how at this hour thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful, woody fields; on old women spinning in cottages; on ships far out in the silent main; on balls and at the Orangerie at Versailles, where high-rouged dames of the palace are even now dancing with double-jacketed Hussar officers; and also on this roaring Hell-porch of an Hotel-du-Ville.

Carlyle is, here and there, led astray by the love of contrast; but not even Heinrich Heine has employed antithesis with more effect than in the familiar passage on the sleeping city in *Sartor*, beginning, "Ach mein Lieber . . . it is a true sublimity to dwell here," and ending, "But I, mein Werther, sit above it all. I am alone with the stars."

His thought, seldom quite original, is often a resuscitation or survival, and owes much of its celebrity to its splendid brocade. *Sartor Resartus* itself escaped the failure that was at first threatened by its eccentricity partly from its noble passion, partly because of the truth of the "clothes philosophy," applied to literature as to life.

His descriptions, too often caricatures, of men are equally vivid. They set the whole great mass of *Friedrich* in a glow; they lighten the tedium of *Cromwell's* lumbering despatches; they give a heart of fire to the *French Revolution*. Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* attempts and fulfils on a smaller what Carlyle achieved on a greater scale. The historian makes us sympathise with the real actors, even more than the novelist does with the imaginary characters on the same stage. From the account of the dying Louis XV. to the "whiff of grape-shot" which closed the last scene of the great drama, there is not a dull page. Théroigne de Méricourt, Marat, Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Mirabeau, Robespierre, Talleyrand, Louis the Simple, above all Marie Antoinette—for whom Carlyle has an affection akin to that of Mirabeau—so kindle and colour the scene that we cannot pause to feel weary of the phrases with which they are labelled. The author's letters show the same power of baptising, which he used often to unfair excess. We can no more forget Count d'Orsay as the "Phœbus Apollo of Dandyism," Daniel Webster's "brows like cliffs and huge black eyes," or Wordsworth "munching raisins" and recognising no poet but himself, or Maurice "attacked by a paroxysm of mental cramp," than we can dismiss from our memories "The Glass Coachman" or "The Tobacco Parliament."

Carlyle quotes a saying of Richter, that Luther's words were like blows; he himself compares those of Burns to

cannon-balls; much of his own writing is a fusillade. All three were vehement in abuse of things and persons they did not like; abuse that might seem reckless, if not sometimes coarse, were it not redeemed, as the rogueries of Falstaff are, by strains of humour. The most Protean quality of Carlyle's genius is his humour: now lighting up the crevices of some quaint fancy, now shining over his serious thought like sunshine over the sea, it is at its best as finely quaint as that of Cervantes, more humane than Swift's. There is in it, as in all the highest humour, a sense of apparent contrast, even of contradiction, in life, of matter for laughter in sorrow and tears in joy. He seems to check himself, and as if afraid of wearing his heart in his sleeve, throws in absurd illustrations of serious propositions, partly to show their universal range, partly in obedience to an instinct of reserve, to escape the reproach of sermonising and to cut the story short. Carlyle's grotesque is a mode of his golden silence, a sort of Socratic irony, in the indulgence of which he laughs at his readers and at himself. It appears now in the form of transparent satire, ridicule of his own and other ages, now in droll reference or mock heroic detail, in an odd conception, a character sketch, an event in parody, in an antithesis or simile—sometimes it lurks in a word, and again in a sentence. In direct pathos—the other side of humour—he is equally effective. His denunciations of sentiment remind us of Plato attacking the poets, for he is at heart the most emotional of writers, the greatest of the prose poets of England; and his dramatic sympathy extends alike to the actors in real events and to his ideal creations. Few more pathetic passages occur in literature than his “stories of the deaths of kings.” The following among the less known of his eloquent passages is an apotheosis of their burials:

In this manner did the men of the Eastern Counties take up the slain body of their Edmund, where it lay cast forth in the village of Hoxne; seek out the severed head and reverently reunite the same. They embalmed him with myrrh and sweet spices, with love, pity, and all high and awful thoughts; consecrating him with a very storm of melodious, adoring admiration, and sun-dried showers of tears; joyfully, yet with awe (as all deep joy has something of the awful in it), commemorating his noble deeds and godlike walk and conversation while on Earth. Till, at length, the very Pope and Cardinals at Rome were forced to hear of it; and they, summing up as correctly as they well could, with *Advocatus Diaboli* pleadings and other forms of process, the general verdict of mankind, declared that he had in very fact led a hero's life in this world; and, being now gone, was gone, as they conceived, to God above and reaping his reward there. Such, they said, was the best judgment they could form of the case, and truly not a bad judgment.

Carlyle's reverence for the past makes him even more apt to be touched by its sorrows than amused by its follies. With a sense of brotherhood he holds out hands to all that were weary; he feels even for the pedlars climbing the Hohenzollern valley, and pities the solitude of soul on the frozen Schreckhorn of power, whether in a dictator of Paraguay or in a Prussian prince. He leads us to the death-chamber of Louis XV., of Mirabeau, of Cromwell, of Sterling, his own lost friend; and we feel with him in the presence of a solemnising mystery. Constantly, amid the din of arms or words, and the sarcasms by which he satirises and contemns old follies and idle strifes, a gentler feeling wells up in his pages like the sound of the Angelus. Such pauses of pathos are the records of real or fanciful situations, as of Teufelsdröckh "left alone with the night" when Blumine and Herr Towgood ride down the valley; of Oliver recalling the old days of St. Ives; of the Electress Louisa bidding adieu to her Elector:

At the moment of her death, it is said, when speech had fled, he felt from her hand, which lay in his, three slight pressures—farewell thrice mutely spoken in that manner, not easily to forget in this world.

There is nothing more pathetic in the range of his works, if in that of our literature, than the account of the relations of father and son in the domestic history of the Prussian Court, from the first estrangement between them—the young Friedrich in his prison at Cüstrin, the old Friedrich gliding about seeking shelter from ghosts, mourning for Absalom—to the reconciliation, the end, and the after-thoughts:

The last breath of Friedrich Wilhelm having fled, Friedrich hurried to a private room; sat there all in tears; looking back through the gulfs of the Past, upon such a Father now rapt away forever. Sad all and soft in the moonlight of memory—the lost Loved One all in the right as we now see, we all in the wrong! This, it appears, was the Son's fixed opinion. Seven years hence here is how Friedrich concludes the *History* of his Father, written with a loyal admiration throughout: "We have left under silence the domestic chagrins of this great Prince; readers must have some indulgence for the faults of the children, in consideration of the virtues of such a Father." All in tears he sits at present, meditating these sad things. In a little while the Old Dessauer, about to leave for Dessau, ventures in to the Crown Prince, Crown Prince no longer; "embraces his knees," offers weeping his condolence, his congratulation; hopes withal that his sons and he will be continued in their old posts, and that he the Old Dessauer "will have the same authority as in the late reign." Friedrich's eyes, at this last clause, flash out tearless, strangely Olympian. "In your posts I have no thought of making change; in your posts yes; and as to authority I know of none there can be but what resides in the king that is sovereign," which, as it were, struck the breath out of the Old Dessauer; and sent him home with a painful miscellany of feelings, astonishment not wanting among them. At an after-hour the same night Friedrich went to Berlin, met by acclamation enough. He slept there not without tumult of dreams, one may fancy; and on awakening next morning the first sound he

heard was that of the regiment glasing under his windows, swearing fealty to the new King. He sprang out of bed in a tempest of emotion; bustled distractedly to and fro, wildly weeping. Pöllnitz, who came into the anteroom, found him in this state, "half-dressed, with dishevelled hair, in tears, and as if beside himself." "These huzzahings only tell me what I have lost," said the new King. "He was in great suffering," suggested Pöllnitz; "he is now at rest." True, he suffered; but he was here with us; and now—

Carlyle has said of Dante's *Francesca*, "that it is a thing woven as of rainbows on a ground of eternal black." The phrase, well applied to the *Inferno*, is a perhaps half-conscious verdict on his own tenderness as exhibited in his life and in his works.

CHAPTER IX.

CARLYLE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

PERHAPS the profoundest of Robert Browning's critics, in the opening sentence of his work,¹ quotes a saying of Hegel's, "A great man condemns the world to the task of explaining him;" adding, "The condemnation is a double one, and it generally falls heaviest on the great man himself who has to submit to explanation." "Cousin," the graceful Eclectic is reported to have said to the great Philosopher, "Will you oblige me by stating the results of your teaching in a few sentences?" and to have received the reply, "It is not easy, especially in French."

The retort applies, with severity, to those who attempt to systematise Carlyle; for he himself was, as we have seen, intolerant of system. His mathematical attainment and his antipathy to logical methods, beyond the lines of square and circle, his love of concise fact and his often sweeping assertions are characteristic of the same contradictions in his nature as his almost tyrannical premises and his practically tender-hearted conclusions. A hard thinker, he was never a close reasoner; in all that relates to human

¹ *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, by Professor Henry Jones, of St. Andrews.

affairs he relies on nobility of feeling rather than on continuity of thought. Claiming the full latitude of the prophet to warn, exhort, even to command, he declines either to preach or to accept the rubric of the partisan or of the priest.

In praise of German literature, he remarks, "One of its chief qualities is that it has no particular theory at all on the front of it;" and of its leaders, "I can only speak of the revelations these men have made to me. As to their doctrines, there is nothing definite or precise to be said;" yet he asserts that Goethe, Richter, and the rest, took him "out of the blackness and darkness of death." This is nearly the feeling that his disciples of forty years ago entertained towards himself; but their discipleship has rarely lasted through life. They came to his writings, inspired by the youthful enthusiasm that carries with it a vein of credulity, intoxicated by their fervour as by new wine or mountain air, and found in them the key of the perennial riddle and the solution of the insoluble mystery. But in later years the curtain to many of them became the picture.

When Carlyle was first recognised in London as a rising author, curiosity was rife as to his "opinions;" was he a Chartist at heart or an Absolutist, a Calvinist like Knox, a Deist like Hume, a Feudalist with Scott, or a Democrat with Burns—inquisitions mostly vain. He had come from the Scotch moors and his German studies, a strange element, into the midst of an almost foreign society, not so much to promulgate a new set of opinions as to infuse a new life into those already existing. He claimed to have a "mission," but it was less to controvert any form of creed than to denounce the insufficiency of shallow modes of belief. He raised the tone of literature by referring to

higher standards than these currently accepted ; he tried to elevate men's minds to the contemplation of something better than themselves, and impress upon them the vacuity of lip-services ; he insisted that the matter of most consequence was the grip with which they held their convictions and their willingness to sacrifice the interests on which they could lay their hands in loyalty to some nobler faith. He taught that beliefs by hearsay are not only barren but obstructive ; that it is only

When half-gods go, the gods arrive.

But his manner of reading these important lessons admitted the retort that he himself was content rather to dwell on what is *not* than to discover what *is* true. "Belief," he reiterates, is the cure for all the worst of human ills ; but belief in what or in whom ? In "the eternities and immensities," as an answer, requires definition. It means that we are not entitled to regard ourselves as the centres of the universe ; that we are but atoms of space and time, with relations infinite beyond our personalities ; that the first step to a real recognition of our duties is the sense of our inferiority to those above us, our realisation of the continuity of history and life, our faith and acquiescence in some universal law. This truth, often set forth

By saint, by sage, by preacher, and by poet,

no one has enforced with such eloquence as Carlyle ; but though he founded a dynasty of ideas, they are comparatively few ; like a group of strolling players, each with a well-filled wardrobe, and ready for many parts.

The difficulty of defining Carlyle results not merely from

his frequent golden nebulosity, but from his love of contradicting even himself. Dr. Johnson confessed to Boswell that when arguing in his dreams he was often worsted and took credit for the resignation with which he bore these defeats, forgetting that the victor and the vanquished were one and the same. Similarly his successor took liberties with himself which he would allow to no one else, and in doing so he has taken liberties with his reader. His praise and blame of the profession of letters, as the highest priesthood and the meanest trade; his early exaltation of "the writers of newspapers, pamphlets, books," as "the real effective working church of a modern country;" and his later expressed contempt for journalism as "mean and demoralising"—"we must destroy the faith in newspapers;" his alternate faith and unfaith in Individualism; the teaching of the *Characteristics* and the *Signs of the Times* that all healthy genius is unconscious, and the censure of Sir Walter Scott for troubling himself too little with mysteries; his commendation of "the strong warrior" for writing no books, and his taking sides with the mediæval monks against the king—there is no reconciliation of such contradictories. They are the expression of diverse moods and emphatically of different stages of mental progress, the later, as a rule, more negative than the earlier.

This change is most marked in the sphere of politics. At the close of his student days Carlyle was to all intents a Radical, and believed in Democracy;¹ he saw hungry masses around him, and, justly attributing some of their suffering to misgovernment, vented his sympathetic zeal for the oppressed in denunciation of the oppressors. He

¹ Passage quoted (Chap. II.) about the Glasgow Radical rising in 1819.

began not only by sympathising with the people, but by believing in their capacity to manage best their own affairs: a belief that steadily waned as he grew older until he denied to them even the right to choose their rulers. As late, however, as 1830, he argued against Irving's conservatism in terms recalled in the *Reminiscences*. "He objected clearly to my Reform Bill notions, found Democracy a thing forbidden, leading even to outer darkness: I a thing inevitable and obliged to lead whithersoever it could." During the same period he clenched his theory by taking a definite side in the controversy of the age. "This," he writes to Macvey Napier—"this is the day when the lords are to reject the Reform Bill. The poor lords can only accelerate (by perhaps a century) their own otherwise inevitable enough abolition."

The political part of *Sartor Resartus*, shadowing forth some scheme of well-organised socialism, yet anticipates, especially in the chapter on *Organic Filaments*, the writer's later strain of belief in dukes, earls, and marshals of men; but this work, religious, ethical, and idyllic, contains mere vague suggestions in the sphere of practical life. About this time Carlyle writes of liberty: "What art thou to the valiant and the brave when thou art thus to the weak and timid, dearer than life, stronger than death, higher than purest love?" and agrees with the verdict, "The slow poison of despotism is worse than the convulsive struggles of anarchy." But he soon passed from the mood represented by Emily Brontë to that of the famous apostrophe of Madame Roland. He proclaimed that liberty to do as we like is a fatal license, that the only true liberty is that of doing what is right, which he interprets living under the laws enacted by the wise. In 1832 he writes to his wife, "Tell Mrs. Jeffrey that I am that monster made up

of all the Whigs hate—a radical and an absolutist.” In the result, the Absolutist, in a spirit made after Plato’s conception of various elements, devoured the Radical. The leading counsel against the aristocracy changed his brief and became chief advocate on their side, declaring “we must recognise the hereditary principle if there is to be any fixity in things.” As early as 1835, he writes to Emerson :

I believe literature to be as good as dead . . . and nothing but hungry Revolt and Radicalism appointed us for perhaps three generations. . . . I suffer also terribly from the solitary existence I have all along had ; it is becoming a kind of passion with me to feel myself among my brothers. And then How ? Alas, I care not a doit for Radicalism, nay, I feel it to be a wretched necessity unfit for me ; Conservatism being not unfit only but false for me : yet these two are the grand categories under which all English spiritual activity, that so much as thinks remuneration possible, must range itself.

And somewhat later :

People accuse me, not of being an incendiary Sansculotte, but of being a Tory, thank Heaven !

Some one has written with a big brush, “He who is not a radical in his youth is a knave, he who is not a conservative in his age is a fool.” The rough, if not rude, generalisation has been plausibly supported by the changes in the mental careers of Burke, Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth. But Carlyle was “a spirit of another sort,” of more mixed yarn ; and, as there is a vein of conservatism in his early Radicalism, so there is, as also in the cases of Landor and even of Goethe, still a revolutionary streak in his later Conservatism. Consequently, in his instance, there is a plea in favour of the prepossession (especially

strong in Scotland) which leads the political or religious party that a distinguished man has left still to persist in claiming him; while that which he has joined accepts him, if at all, with distrust. Scotch Liberals will not give up Carlyle, one of his biographers keenly asseverating that he was to the last "a democrat at heart;" while the representative organ of northern Conservatism on the same ground continues to assail him—"mit der Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens." On all questions directly bearing on the physical welfare of the masses of the people, his speech and action remained consistent with his declaration that he had "never heard an argument for the corn laws which might not make angels weep." From first to last, he was an advocate of Free Trade—though under the constant protest that the greatness of a nation depended in a very minor degree on the abundance of its possessions—and of free, unsectarian, and compulsory Education; while, in theology, though remote from either, he was more tolerant of the dogmatic narrowness of the Low Church of the lower, than of the Ritualism of the upper, classes. His unwavering interest in the poor and his belief that legislation should keep them in constant view, was in accord with the spirit of Bentham's rubric; but Carlyle, rightly or wrongly, came to regard the bulk of men as children requiring not only help and guidance but control.

On the question of "the Suffrage" he completely revolved. It appears, from the testimony of Mr. Froude, that the result of the Reform Bill of 1832 disappointed him in merely shifting the power from the owners of land to the owners of shops, and left the handicraftsmen and his own peasant class no better off. Before a further extension became a point of practical politics he had arrived at the conviction that the ascertainment of truth and the

election of the fittest did not lie with majorities. These sentences of 1835 represent a transition stage :

Conservatism I cannot attempt to conserve, believing it to be a portentous embodied sham. . . . Whether the Tories stay out or in, it will be all for the advance of Radicalism, which means revolt, dissolution, and confusion, and a darkness which no man can see through.

No one had less faith in the pæan chaunted by Macaulay and others on the progress of the nation or of the race, a progress which, without faith in great men, was to him inevitably downward ; no one protested with equal emphasis against the levelling doctrines of the French Revolution. It has been observed that Carlyle's *Chartism* was "his first practical step in politics;" it is more true to say that it first embodied, with more than his usual precision, the convictions he had for some time held of the dangers of our social system ; with an indication of some of the means to ward them off, based on the realisation of the interdependence of all classes in the State. This book is remarkable as containing his last, very partial, concessions to the democratic creed, the last in which he is willing to regard a wide suffrage as a possible, though by no means the best, expedient. Subsequently, in *Past and Present* and the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, he came to hold "that with every extension of the Franchise those whom the voters would elect would be steadily inferior and more unfit." Every stage in his political progress is marked by a growing distrust in the judgment of the multitude, a distrust set forth, with every variety of metaphor, in such sentences as the following :

There is a divine message or eternal regulation of the Universe.

How find it? All the world answers me, "Count heads, ask Universal Suffrage by the ballot-box and that will tell!" From Adam's time till now the Universe was wont to be of a somewhat abstruse nature, partially disclosing itself to the wise and noble-minded alone, whose number was not the majority. Of what use towards the general result of finding out what it is wise to do, can the fools be? . . . If of ten men nine are recognisable as fools, which is a common calculation, how in the name of wonder will yoh ever get a ballot-box to grind you out a wisdom from the votes of these ten men? . . . Only by reducing to zero nine of these votes can wisdom ever issue from your ten. The mass of men consulted at the hustings upon any high matter whatsoever, is as ugly an exhibition of human stupidity as this world sees. . . . If the question be asked and the answer given, I will generally consider in any case of importance that the said answer is likely to be wrong, and that I have to go and do the reverse of the same . . . for how should I follow a multitude to do evil. Cease to brag to me of America and its model institutions. . . . On this side of the Atlantic or on that, Democracy is forever impossible! The Universe is a monarchy and a hierarchy, the noble in the high places, the ignoble in the low; this is in all times and in all places the Almighty Maker's law. Democracy, take it where you will, is found a regulated method of rebellion, it abrogates the old arrangement of things, and leaves zero and vacuity. It is the consummation of no-government and *laissez faire*.

Alongside of this train of thought there runs a constant protest against the spirit of revolt. In *Sartor* we find: "Whoso cannot obey cannot be free, still less bear rule; he that is the inferior of nothing can be the superior of nothing;" and in *Chartism*:

Men who rebel and urge the lower classes to rebel ought to have other than formulas to go upon . . . those to whom millions of suffering fellow-creatures are "masses," mere explosive masses for blowing down Bastiles with, for voting at hustings for us—such men are of the questionable species. . . . Obedience . . . is the primary duty of man. . . . Of all "rights of men" this right of the ignorant

to be guided by the wiser, gently or forcibly—is the indisputablest. . . . Cannot one discern, across all democratic turbulence, clattering of ballot-boxes, and infinite sorrowful jangle, that this is at bottom the wish and prayer of all human hearts everywhere, "Give me a leader."

The last sentence indicates the transition from the merely negative aspect of Carlyle's political philosophy to the positive, which is his HERO-WORSHIP, based on the excessive admiration for individual greatness—an admiration common to almost all imaginative writers, whether in prose or verse; on his notions of order and fealty, and on a reverence for the past, which is also a common property of poets. Antiquity, then Feudalism, according to his view, had their chiefs, captains, kings, and flourished or not as it followed them well or ill. Democracy, the new and dangerous force of this age, must be represented and then denominated by great men raised to independence over the arbitrary will of a multitude, to be trusted and obeyed and followed if need be to death.

Your noblest men at the summit of affairs, is the ideal world of poets. . . . Other aim in this earth we have none. That we all reverence "great men" is to me the living rock amid all rushings down whatsoever. All that democracy ever meant lies there, the attainment of a truer Aristocracy or Government of the Best. Make search for the Able man. How to get him is the question of questions.

It is precisely the question to which Carlyle never gives, and hardly attempts a reply; and his failure to answer invalidates the larger half of his politics. Plato has at least detailed a scheme for eliminating his philosopher guardians, though it somewhat pedantically suggests a series of Chinese examinations: his political, though probably unconscious disciple has only a few negative tests. The warrior or

sage who is to rule is *not* to be chosen by the majority, especially in our era, when they would choose the Orators who seduce and "traduce the State;" nor are we ever told that the election is to rest with either Under or Upper House: the practical conclusion is that when we find a man of great force of character, whether representing our own opinions or the reverse, we should take him on trust. This brings us to the central maxim of Carlyle's political philosophy, to which we must, even in our space, give some consideration, as its true meaning has been the theme of so much dispute.

It is a misfortune of original thought that it is hardly ever put in practice by the original thinker. When his rank as a teacher is recognised, his words have already lost half their value by repetition. His manner is aped by those who find an easy path to notoriety in imitation; the belief he held near his heart is worn as a creed like a badge; the truth he promulgated is distorted in a room of mirrors, half of it is a truism, the other half a falsism. That which begun as a denunciation of tea-table morality, is itself the tea-table morality of the next generation: an outcry against cant may become the quintessence of cant; a revolt from tyranny the basis of a new tyranny; the condemnation of sects the foundation of a new sect; the proclamation of peace a bone of contention. There is an ambiguity in most general maxims and a seed of error, which assumes preponderance over the truth when the interpreters of the maxim are men easily led by formulæ. Nowhere is this degeneracy more strikingly manifested than in the history of some of the maxims which Carlyle either first promulgated or enforced by his adoption. When he said, or quoted, "Silence is better than speech," he meant to inculcate patience and reserve. Always think

before you speak: rather lose fluency than waste words: never speak for the sake of speaking. It is the best advice, but they who need it most are the last to take it; those who speak and write not because they have something to say, but because they wish to say or must say something, will continue to write and speak as long as they can spell or articulate. Thoughtful men are apt to misapply the advice, and betray their trust when they sit still and leave the "war of words to those who like it." When Carlyle condemned self-consciousness, a constant introspection and comparison of self with others, he theoretically struck at the root of the morbid moods of himself and other mental analysts; he had no intention to over-exalt mere muscularity or to deify athletic sports. It were easy to multiply instances of truths clearly conceived at first and parodied in their promulgation; but when we have the distinct authority of the discoverer himself for their correct interpretation, we can at once appeal to it. A yet graver, not uncommon, source of error arises when a great writer misapplies the maxims of his own philosophy, or states them in such a manner that they are sure to be misapplied.

Mr. Carlyle has laid down the doctrine that MIGHT IS RIGHT at various times and in such various forms, with and without modification or caveat, that the real meaning can only be ascertained from his own application of it. He has made clear, what goes without saying, that by "might" he does not intend mere physical strength.

Of conquest we may say that it never yet went by brute force; conquest of that kind does not endure. The strong man, what is he? The wise man. His muscles and bones are not stronger than ours; but his soul is stronger, clearer, nobler. . . . Late in man's history, yet clearly at length, it becomes manifest to the dullest that

mind is stronger than matter, that not brute Force, but only Persuasion and Faith, is the king of this world. . . . Intellect has to govern this world and will do it.

There are sentences which indicate that he means something more than even mental force; as in a letter to Mr. Lecky, quoted by Mr. Froude (vol. iv. p. 288), "Right is the eternal symbol of Might;" and again in *Chartism*, "Might and right do differ frightfully from hour to hour; but give them centuries to try it, and they are found to be identical. The strong thing is the just thing. In kings we have either a divine right or a diabolic wrong." But, on the other hand, we read in *Past and Present*:

Savage fighting Heptarchies: their fighting is an ascertainment who has the right to rule over them.

And again:

Clear undeniable right, clear undeniable might: *either* of these, once ascertained, puts an end to battle.

And elsewhere:

Rights men have none save to be governed justly. . . . Rights I will permit thee to call everywhere correctly articulated mights. . . . All goes by wager of battle in this world, and it is, well understood, the measure of all worth. . . . By right divine the strong and capable govern the weak and foolish. . . . Strength we may say is Justice itself.

It is not left for us to balance those somewhat indefinite definitions. Carlyle has himself in his *Histories* illustrated and enforced his own interpretations of the summary views of his political treatises. There he has demonstrated that

his doctrine, "Might is Right," is no mere unguarded expression of the truism that moral might is right. In his hands it implies that virtue is in all cases a property of strength, that strength is everywhere a property of virtue; that power of whatever sort having any considerable endurance, carries with it the seal and signal of its claim to respect, that whatever has established itself has, in the very act, established its right to be established. He is never careful enough to keep before his readers what he must himself have dimly perceived, that victory *by right* belongs not to the force of will alone, apart from clear and just conceptions of worthy ends. Even in its crude form, the maxim errs not so much in what it openly asserts as in what it implicitly denies. Aristotle (the first among ancients to *question* the institution of slavery, as Carlyle has been one of the last of moderns to defend it) more guardedly admits that strength is in itself *a good*—καὶ ἔστιν αἰὲν τὸ κρατοῦν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ἀγαθοῦ τινος—but leaves it to be maintained that there are forms of good which do not show themselves in excess of strength. Several of Carlyle's conclusions and verdicts seem to show that he only acknowledges those types of excellence that have already manifested themselves as powers; and this doctrine (which, if adopted in earlier ages, would practically have left possession with physical strength), colours all his History and much of his Biography. Energy of any sort compels his homage. Himself a Titan, he shakes hands with all Titans, Gothic gods, Knox, Columbus, the fuliginous Mirabeau, burly Danton dying with "no weakness" on his lips. The fulness of his charity is for the errors of Mohammed, Cromwell, Burns, Napoleon I. — whose mere belief in his own star he calls sincerity — the atrocious Francia, the Norman kings, the Jacobins, Brandenburg des-

pots ; the fulness of his contempt for the conscientious indecision of Necker, the Girondists, the Moderates of our own Commonwealth. He condones all that ordinary judgments regard as the tyranny of conquest, and has for the conquered only a *væ victis*. In this spirit he writes :

M. Thierry celebrates with considerable pathos the fate of the Saxons ; the fate of the Welsh, too, moves him ; of the Celts generally, whom a fiercer race swept before them into the mountains, whither they were not worth following. What can we say, but that the cause which pleased the gods had in the end to please Cato also.

When all is said, Carlyle's inconsistent optimism throws no more light than others have done on the apparent relapses of history, as the overthrow of Greek civilisation, the long night of the Dark Ages, the spread of the Russian power during the last century, or of continental militaryism in the present. In applying the tests of success or failure we must bear in mind that success is from its very nature conspicuous. We only know that brave men have failed when they have had a "sacred bard." The good that is lost is, *ipso facto*, forgotten. We can rarely tell of greatness unrecognised, for the very fact of our being able to tell of it would imply a former recognition. The might of evil walks in darkness : we remember the martyrs who, by their deaths, ultimately drove the Inquisition from England ; not those whose courage quailed. "It was their fate," as a recent writer remarks, "that was the tragedy." Reading Carlyle's maxim between the lines of his chapter on the Reformation, and noting that the Inquisition triumphed in Spain, while in Austria, Bavaria, and Bohemia the new truths were stifled by stratagem or by force ; that the massacre of St. Bartholomew was successful ; and that the revocation of the Edict of Nantes killed the France of

Henry IV., we see its limitations even in the long perspective of the past.¹ Let us, however, grant that in the ultimate issue the Platonic creed, "Justice is stronger than injustice," holds good. It is when Carlyle turns to politics and regards them as history accomplished instead of history in progress that his principle leads to the most serious error. No one has a more withering contempt for evil as meanness and imbecility; but he cannot see it in the strong hand. Of two views, equally correct, "evil is weakness," such evil as sloth, and "corruptio optimi pessima," such evil as tyranny—he only recognises the first. Despising the palpable anarchies of passion, he has no word of censure for the more settled form of anarchy which announced, "Order reigns at Warsaw." He refuses his sympathy to all unsuccessful efforts, and holds that if races are trodden underfoot, they are φύσει δοῦλοι . . . δυνάμενοι ἄλλον εἶναι; they who have allowed themselves to be subjugated deserve their fate. The cry of "oppressed nationalities" was to him mere cant. His Providence is on the side of the big battalions, and forgives very violent means to an orderly end. To his credit he declined to acknowledge the right of Louis Napoleon to rule France; but he accepted the Czars, and ridiculed Mazzini till forced to admit, almost with chagrin, that he had, "after all," substantially succeeded.

Treason never prospers, what's the reason?

That when it prospers, none dare call it treason.

Apprehending, on the whole more keenly than any of his contemporaries, the foundations of past greatness, his

¹ *Vide* Mill's *Liberty*, chap. ii., pp. 52-54.

invectives and teaching lay athwart much that is best as well as much that is most hazardous in the new ideas of the age. Because mental strength, endurance, and industry do not appear prominently in the Negro race, he looks forward with satisfaction to the day when a band of white buccaneers shall undo Toussaint l'Ouverture's work of liberation in Hayti, advises the English to revoke the Emancipation Act in Jamaica, and counsels the Americans to lash their slaves—better, he admits, made serfs and not saleable by auction—not more than is necessary to get from them an amount of work satisfactory to the Anglo-Saxon mind. Similarly he derides all movements based on a recognition of the claims of weakness to consideration and aid.

Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering.

The application of the maxim, "Might is Right," to a theory of government is obvious; the strongest government must be the best, *i.e.* that in which power, in the last resort supreme, is concentrated in the hands of a single ruler; the weakest, that in which they are most widely diffused, is the worst. Carlyle in his Address to the Edinburgh students commends Machiavelli for insight in attributing the preservation of Rome to the institution of the Dictatorship. In his last great work this view is developed in the lessons he directs the reader to draw from Prussian history. The following conveys his last comparative estimate of an absolute and a limited monarchy :

This is the first triumph of the constitutional Principle which has since gone to such sublime heights among us—heights which we begin at last to suspect may be depths leading down, all men now ask whitherwards. A much-admired invention in its time, that of letting

go the rudder or setting a wooden figure expensively to take care of it, and discovering that the ship would sail of itself so much the more easily. Of all things a nation needs first to be drilled, and a nation that has not been governed by so-called tyrants never came to much in the world.

Among the currents of thought contending in our age, two are conspicuously opposed. The one says: Liberty is an end, not a mere means in itself; apart from practical results the crown of life. Freedom of thought and its expression, and freedom of action, bounded only by the equal claim of our fellows, are desirable for their own sakes as constituting national vitality: and even when, as is sometimes the case, Liberty sets itself against improvements for a time, it ultimately accomplishes more than any reforms could accomplish without it. The fewer restraints that are imposed from without on human beings the better: the province of law is only to restrain men from violently or fraudulently invading the province of other men. This view is maintained and in great measure sustained by J. S. Mill in his *Liberty*, the *Areopagitica* of the nineteenth century, and more elaborately if not more philosophically set forth in the comprehensive treatise of Wilhelm von Humboldt on *The Sphere and Duties of Government*. These writers are followed with various reserves by Grote, Buckle, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and by Mr. Lecky. Mill writes:

The idea of rational Democracy is not that the people themselves govern; but that they have security for good government. This security they can only have by retaining in their own hands the ultimate control. The people ought to be masters employing servants more skilful than themselves.¹

¹ It should be noted that Mill lays as great stress, and a more practical stress, on Individualism as Carlyle does. He has the same

To this Carlyle, with at least the general assent of Mr. Fronde, Mr. Ruskin, and Sir James Stephen, substantially replies :

In freedom for itself there is nothing to raise a man above a fly ; the value of a human life is that of its work done ; the prime province of law is to get from its subjects the most of the best work. The first duty of a people is to find — which means to accept — their chief ; their second and last to obey him. We see to what men have been brought by “ Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,” by the dreams of idealogues, and the purchase of votes.

This, the main drift of Carlyle’s political teaching, rests on his absolute belief in strength (which always grows by concentration), on his unqualified admiration of order, and on his utter disbelief in what his adverse friend Mazzini was wont, with over-confidence, to appeal to as “ collective wisdom.” Theoretically there is much to be said for this view : but, in practice, it involves another idealism as aerial as that of any “ idealogue ” on the side of Liberty. It points to the establishment of an Absolutism which must continue to exist, whether wisdom survives in the absolute rulers or ceases to survive. *Κρατεῖν δ’ ἔστι καὶ μὴ δικαίως.* The rule of Cæsars, Napoleons, Czars may have been beneficent in times of revolution ; but their right to rule is apt to pass before their power, and when the latter

belief in the essential mediocrity of the masses of men whose “ thinking is done for them . . . through the newspapers,” and the same scorn for “ the present low state of society.” He writes, “ The initiation of all wise and noble things comes and must come from individuals : generally at first from some one individual ; ” but adds, “ I am not countenancing the sort of ‘ hero worship ’ which applauds the strong man of genius for forcibly seizing on the government of the world. . . . All he can claim is freedom to point out the way.”

descends by inheritance, as from M. Aurelius to Commodus, it commonly degenerates. It is well to learn, from a safe distance, the amount of good that may be associated with despotism: its worst evil is lawlessness, it not only suffocates freedom and induces inertia, but it renders wholly uncertain the life of those under its control. Most men would rather endure the "slings and arrows" of an irresponsible Press, the bustle and jargon of many elections, the delay of many reforms, the narrowness of many streets, than have lived from 1814 to 1840, with the noose around all necks, in Paraguay, or even precariously prospered under the paternal shield of the great Fritz's extraordinary father, Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia.

Carlyle's doctrine of the ultimate identity of "might and right" never leads, with him, to its worst consequence, a fatalistic or indolent repose; the withdrawal from the world's affairs of the soul "holding no form of creed but contemplating all." That he was neither a consistent optimist nor pessimist is apparent from his faith in the power of man in some degree to mould his fate. Not "belief, belief," but "action, action," is his working motto. On the title-page of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* he quotes from Rushworth on a colloquy of Sir David Ramsay and Lord Reay in 1638: "Then said his Lordship, 'Well, God mend all!'—'Nay, by God, Donald; we must help Him to mend it,' said the other."

"I am not a Tory," he exclaimed, after the clamour on the publication of *Chartism*, "no, but one of the deepest though perhaps the quietest of Radicals." With the Toryism which merely says "stand to your guns" and, for the rest, "let well alone," he had no sympathy. There was nothing selfish in his theories. He felt for, and was willing to fight for mankind, though he could not trust them;

even his "king" he defines to be a minister or servant of the State. "The love of power," he says, "if thou understand what to the manful heart power signifies, is a very noble and indispensable love;" that is, the power to raise men above the "Pig Philosophy," the worship of clothes, the acquiescence in wrong. "The world is not here for me, but I for it." "Thou shalt is written upon life in characters as terrible as thou shalt not;" are protests against the mere negative virtues which religionists are wont unduly to exalt.

Carlyle's so-called Mysticism is a part of his German poetry; in the sphere of common life and politics he made use of plain prose, and often proved himself as shrewd as any of his northern race. An excessively "good hater," his pet antipathies are generally bad things. In the abstract they are always so; but about the abstract there is no dispute. Every one dislikes or professes to dislike shams, hypocrisies, phantoms—by whatever tiresomely reiterated epithet he may be pleased to address things that are not what they pretend to be. Diogenes's toil with the lantern alone distinguished the cynic Greek, in admiration of an honest man. Similarly the genuine zeal of his successor appears in painstaking search; his discrimination in the detection, his eloquence in his handling of humbugs. Occasional blunders in the choice of objects of contempt and of worship—between which extremes he seldom halts—demonstrate his fallibility, but outside the sphere of literary and purely personal criticism he seldom attacks any one, or anything, without a show of reason. To all gospels there are two sides, and a great teacher who, by reason of the very fire that makes him great, disdains to halt and hesitate and consider the *juste milieu*—seldom guards himself against misinterpretation or excess. Mazzini writes,

"He weaves and unweaves his web like Penelope, preaches by turns life and nothingness, and wearies out the patience of his readers by continually carrying them from heaven to hell." Carlyle, like Ruskin, keeps himself right not by caveats, but by contradictions of himself, and sometimes in a way least to be expected. Much of his writing is a blast of war, or a protest against the philanthropy that sets charity before justice. Yet in a letter to the London Peace Congress of 1851, dated 18th July, we find :

I altogether approve of your object. Clearly the less war and cutting of throats we have among us, it will be the better for us all. As men no longer wear swords in the streets, so neither by-and-by will nations. . . . How many meetings would one expedition to Russia cover the cost of ?

He denounced the Americans, in apparent ignorance of their "Constitution," for having no Government; and yet admitted that what he called their anarchy had done perhaps more than anything else could have done to subdue the wilderness. He spoke with scorn of the "rights of women," their demand for the suffrage, and the *cohue* of female authors, expressing himself in terms of ridiculous ridicule of such writers as Mrs. Austin, George Sand, and George Eliot; but he strenuously advocated the claim of women to a recognised medical education. He reviled "Model Prisons" as pampering institutes of "a universal sluggard and scoundrel amalgamation society," and yet seldom passed on the streets one of the "Devil's elect" without giving him a penny. He set himself against every law or custom that tended to make harder the hard life of the poor: there was no more consistent advocate of the abolition of the "Game Laws." Emerson says of the mediæval architects, "they builded better than they knew." Carlyle

felt more softly than he said, and could not have been trusted to execute one of his own Rhadamanthine decrees.¹ Scratch the skin of the Tartar and you find beneath the despised humanitarian. Everything that he has written on "The Condition of England Question" has a practical bearing, and many of his suggestions have found a place on our code, vindicating the assertion of the *Times* of the day after his death, that "the novelties and paradoxes of 1846 are to a large extent nothing but the good-sense of 1881." Such are:—his insistence on affording every facility for merit to rise from the ranks, partially embodied in the Abolition of Purchase Act; his advocacy of State-aided Emigration, of administrative and civil service Reform—the abolition of "the circumlocution office" in Downing Street—of the institution of a Minister of Education; his dwelling on the duties as well as the rights of landowners—the theme of so many Land Acts; his enlarging on the superintendence of labour—made practical in Factory and Limited Hours' Bills—on care of the really destitute, on the better housing of the poor, on the regulation of weights and measures; his general contention for fixing more exactly the province of the legislative and the executive bodies. Carlyle's view that we should find a way to public life for men of eminence who will not cringe to mobs, has made a step towards realisation in the enfranchisement of our universities. Other of his proposals, as the employment of our army and navy in time of peace, and the forcing of able-bodied paupers into "industrial regiments," have become matter of debate which may pave the way to legislation. One of his desiderata, a

¹ *Vide* a remarkable instance of this in the best short *Life of Carlyle*, that by Dr. Richard Garnett, p. 147.

statute of limitations on "puffing," it has not yet been feasible, by the passing of an almost prohibitive duty on advertisements, to realise.

Besides these specific recommendations, three ideas are dominant in Carlyle's political treatises. *First*—A vehement protest against the doctrine of *Laissez faire*; which, he says, "on the part of the governing classes will, we repeat again and again, have to cease; pacific mutual divisions of the spoil and a would-let-well-alone, will no longer suffice;" a doctrine to which he is disposed to trace the Trades-union wars, of which he failed to see the issue. He is so strongly in favor of *Free-trade* between nations that, by an amusing paradox, he is prepared to make it *compulsory*. "All men," he writes in *Past and Present*, "trade with all men when mutually convenient, and are even bound to do it. Our friends of China, who refused to trade, had we not to argue with them, in cannon-shot at last?" But in *Free-trade* between class and class, man and man, within the bounds of the same kingdom, he has no trust; he will not leave "supply and demand" to adjust their relations. The result of doing so is, he holds, the scramble between Capital for larger interest and Labour for higher wage, in which the rich if unchecked will grind the poor to starvation, or drive them to revolt.

Second—As a corollary to the abolition of *Laissez faire*, he advocates the *Organisation of Labour*, "the problem of the whole future to all who will pretend to govern men." The phrase from its vagueness has naturally provoked much discussion. Carlyle's bigoted dislike of Political Economists withheld him from studying their works; and he seems ignorant of the advances that have been made by the "dismal science," or of what it has proved and disproved. Consequently, while brought in evidence by

most of our modern Social idealists, Comtists and Communists alike, all they can say is that he has given to their protest against the existing state of the commercial world a more eloquent expression than their own. He has no compact scheme—as that of St. Simon or Fourier, or Owen—few such definite proposals as those of Karl Marx, Bellamy, Hertzka or Gronlund, or even William Morris. He seems to share with Mill the view that “the restraints of communism are weak in comparison with those of capitalists,” and with Morris to look far forward to some golden age; he has given emphatic support to a copartnership of employers and employed, in which the profits of labour shall be apportioned by some rule of equity, and insisted on the duty of the State to employ those who are out of work in public undertakings.

Enlist, stand drill, and become from banditti soldiers of industry. I will lead you to the Irish bogs . . . English fox-covers . . . New Forest, Salisbury Plains, and Scotch hill-sides which, as yet feed only sheep . . . thousands of square miles . . . destined yet to grow green crops and fresh butter and milk and beef without limit—

an estimate with the usual exaggeration. Carlyle's later work is, however, an advance on his earlier, in its higher appreciation of Industrialism. He looks forward to the boon of “one big railway right across America,” a prophecy since three times fulfilled; and admits that “the new omnipotence of the steam-engine is hewing aside quite other mountains than the physical,” i.e. bridging the gulf between races and binding men to men. He had found, since writing *Sartor*, that dear cotton and slow trains do not help one nearer to God, freedom, and immortality.

Carlyle's *third* practical point is his advocacy of *Emigra-*

tion, or rather his insistence on it as a sufficient remedy for Over-population. He writes of "Malthusianism" with his constant contempt of convictions other than his own:

A full formed man is worth more than a horse. . . . One man in a year, as I have understood it, if you lend him earth will feed himself and nine others (?) . . . Too crowded indeed! . . . What portion of this globe have ye tilled and derved till it will grow no more? How thick stands your population in the Pampas and Savannahs—in the Curragh of Kildare? Let there be an *Emigration Service* . . . so that every honest, willing workman who found England too strait, and the organisation of labour incomplete, might find a bridge to carry him to western lands. . . . Our little isle has grown too narrow for us, but the world is wide enough yet for another six thousand years. . . . If this small western rim of Europe is over-peopled, does not everywhere else, a whole vacant earth, as it were, call to us: "Come and till me, come and reap me."

On this follows an eloquent passage about our friendly Colonies, "overarched by zodiacs and stars, clasped by many sounding seas." Carlyle would apparently force emigration, and coerce the Australians, Americans, and Chinese, to receive our ship-loads of living merchandise; but the problem of population exceeds his solution of it. He everywhere inclines to rely on coercion till it is overmastered by resistance, and to overstretch jurisdiction till it snaps.

His countenance of Autocracy may have disastrous results in Germany, where the latest representative of the Hohenzollerns is ostentatiously laying claim to "right divine." In England, where the opposite tide runs full, it is harmless; but, by a curious irony, our author's leaning to an organised control over social and private as well as public life, his exaltation of duties above rights, may serve as an incentive to the very force he seemed most to dread. Events are every day demonstrating the fallacy of his view

of Democracy as an embodiment of *Laissez faire*. Kant with deeper penetration, indicated its tendency to become despotic. Good government, according to Aristotle, is that of one, of few, or of many, for the sake of all. A Democracy where the many rule for the many alone, may be a deadly engine of oppression; it may trample without appeal on the rights of minorities, and, in the name of the common good, establish and enforce an almost unconditioned tyranny. Carlyle's blindness to this superlative danger—a danger to which Mill, in many respects his unrecognised coadjutor, became alive¹—emphasises the limits of his political foresight. He has consecrated Fraternity with an eloquence unapproached by his peers, and with equal force put to scorn the superstition of Equality; but he has aimed at Liberty destructive shafts, some of which may find a mark the archer little meant.

¹ *Vide passim* the chapter in *Liberty* entitled "Limits to the Authority of Society over the Individual," where Mill denounces the idea of "the majority of operatives in many branches of industry... that bad workmen ought to receive the same wages as good."

CHAPTER X.

CARLYLE'S RELIGION AND ETHICS—RELATION TO PREDECESSORS—INFLUENCE.

THE same advance or retrogression that appears in Carlyle's Politics is traceable in his Religion; though it is impossible to record the stages of the change with even an equal approach to precision. Religion, in the widest sense—faith in some supreme Power above us yet acting for us—was the greater factor of his inner life. But when we further question his Creed, he is either bewilderingly inconsistent or designedly vague. The answer he gives is that of Schiller: "*Welche der Religionen? Keine von allen. Warum? Aus Religion.*" In 1870 he writes: "I begin to think religion again possible for whoever will piously struggle upwards and sacredly refuse to tell lies; which indeed will mostly mean refusal to speak at all on that topic." This and other implied protests against intrusive inquisition are valid in the case of those who keep their own secrets; it is impertinence to "peer and botanise" among the sanctuaries of a poet or politician or historian who does not himself open their doors. But Carlyle has done this in all his books. A reticent writer may veil his convictions on every subject save that on which he writes. An avowed preacher or prophet cannot escape interrogation as to his text.

With all the evidence before us—his collected works,

his friendly confidences, his journals, his fragmentary papers, as the interesting series of jottings entitled "Spiritual Optics," and the partial accounts to Emerson and others of the design of the "Exodus from Houndsditch"—it remains impossible to formulate Carlyle's Theology. We know that he abandoned the ministry, for which he was destined, because, at an early date, he found himself at irreconcilable variance, not on matters of detail but on essentials, with the standards of Scotch Presbyterianism. We know that he never repented or regretted his resolve; that he went, as continuously as possible for a mind so liable to fits and starts, further and further from the faith of his fathers; but that he remained to the last so much affected by it, and by the ineffaceable impress of early associations, that he has been plausibly called "a Calvinist without dogma," "a Calvinist without Christianity," "a Puritan who had lost his creed." We know that he revered the character of Christ, and theoretically accepted the ideal of self-sacrifice; the injunction to return good for evil he never professed to accept; and vicarious sacrifice was contrary to his whole philosophy, which taught that every man must "dree his weird." We know that he not only believed in God as revealed in the larger Bible, the whole history of the human race, but that he threatened, almost with hell-fire, all who dared on this point to give refuge to a doubt. Finally, he believed both in fate and in free-will, in good and evil as powers at internecine war, and in the greater strength and triumph of good at some very far distant date. If we desire to know more of Carlyle's creed we must proceed by "the method of exclusions," and note, in the first place, what he did *not* believe. This process is simplified by the fact that he assailed all convictions other than his own.

Half his teaching is a protest, in variously eloquent phrase, against all forms of *Materialism* and *Hedonism*, which he brands as "worships of Moloch and Astarte," forgetting that progress in physical welfare may lead not only to material, but to mental, if not spiritual, gain. Similarly he denounces *Atheism*, never more vehemently than in his Journals of 1868-1869:

Had no God made this world it were an insupportable place. Laws without a lawgiver, matter without spirit is a gospel of dirt. All that is good, generous, wise, right . . . who or what could by any possibility have given it to me, but One who first had it to give! This is not logic, it is axiom. . . . Poor "Comtism, ghastliest of algebraic spectralities." . . . Canst *thou* by searching find out God? I am not surprised thou canst not, vain fool! If they do abolish God from their poor bewildered hearts, there will be seen such a world as few are dreaming of.

Carlyle calls evidence from all quarters, appealing to Napoleon's question, "Who made all that?" and to Friedrich's belief that intellect "could not have been put into him by an entity that had none of its own," in support of what he calls the Eternal Fact of Facts, to which he clings as to the Rock of Ages, the sole foundation of hope and of morality to one having at root little confidence in his fellow-men.

If people are only driven upon virtuous conduct . . . by association of ideas, and there is no "Infinite Nature of Duty," the world, I should say, had better count its spoons to begin with, and look out for hurricanes and earthquakes to end with.

Carlyle hazardously confessed that as regards the foundations of his faith and morals, with Napoleon and Friedrich II. on his side, he had against him the advancing tide of modern *Science*. He did not attempt to disprove its

facts, or, as Emerson, to sublimate them into a new idealism; he scoffed at and made light of them, *e.g.*:

Geology has got rid of Moses, which surely was no very sublime achievement either. I often think . . . it is pretty much all that science in this age has done. . . . Protoplasm (unpleasant doctrine that we are all, soul and body, made of a kind of blubber, found in nettles among other organisms) appears to be delightful to many. . . . Yesterday there came a pamphlet published at Lewes, a hallelujah on the advent of Atheism. . . . The real joy of Julian (the author) was what surprised me, like the shout of a hyæna on finding that the whole universe was actually carrion. In about seven minutes my great Julian was torn in two and lying in the place fit for him. . . . Descended from Gorillas! Then where is the place for a Creator? Man is only a little higher than the tadpoles, says our new Evangelist. . . . Nobody need argue with these people. Logic never will decide the matter, or will seem to decide it their way. He who traces nothing of God in his own soul, will never find God in the world of matter—mere circlings of force there, of iron regulation, of universal death and merciless indifference. . . . Matter itself is either Nothing or else a product due to man's *mind*. . . . The fast-increasing flood of Atheism on me takes no hold—does not even wet the soles of my feet.¹

“Carlyle,” says one of his intimates, “speaks as if Darwin wished to rob or insult him.” *Scepticism* proper fares as hardly in his hands as definite denial. It is, he declares, “a fatal condition,” and, almost in the spirit of the inquisitors, he attributes it to moral vice as well as intellectual weakness, calling it an “atrophy, a disease of the whole soul,” “a state of mental paralysis,” etc. His fallacious habit of appeal to consequences, which in others he would

¹ Cf. Othello, “Not a jot, not a jot.” Carlyle writes on this question with the agitation of one himself not quite at ease, with none of the calmness of a faith perfectly secure.

have scouted as a commonplace of the pulpit, is conspicuous in his remark on Hume's view of life as "a most melancholy theory," according to which, in the words of Jean Paul, "heaven becomes a gas, God a force, and the second world a grave." He fails to see that all such appeals are beside the question; and deserts the ground of his answer to John Sterling's expostulation, "that is downright Pantheism." "What if it were Pot-theism if it is *true*." It is the same inconsistency which, in practice, led his sympathy for suffering to override his Stoic theories; but it vitiated his reasoning, and made it impossible for him to appreciate the calm, yet legitimately emotional, religiosity of Mill. Carlyle has vetoed all forms of so-called *Orthodoxy*—whether Catholic or Protestant, of Churches High or Low; he abhorred Puseyism, Jesuitry, spoke of the "Free Kirk and other rubbish," and recorded his definite disbelief, in any ordinary sense, in Revelation and in Miracles. "It is as certain as Mathematics that no such thing has ever been on earth." History is a perpetual revelation of God's will and justice, and the stars in their courses are a perpetual miracle, is his refrain. *This is not what orthodoxy means*, and no one was more intolerant than he of rhetorical devices, on such matters, to slur the difference between "Yes" and "No." But having decided that his own "Exodus from Houndsditch" might only open the way to the wilderness, he would allow no one else to take in hand his uncompleted task; and disliked Strauss and Renan even more than he disliked Colenso. "He spoke to me once," says Mr. Froude, "with loathing of the *Vie de Jésus*." I asked if a true life could be written. He said, "Yes, certainly, if it were right to do so; but it is not." Still more strangely he writes to Emerson:

You are the only man of the Unitarian persuasion whom I could unobstructedly like. The others that I have seen were all a kind of half-way-house characters, who I thought should, if they had not wanted courage, have ended in unbelief, in faint possible *Theism*; which I like considerably worse than *Atheism*. Such, I could not but feel, deserve the fate they find here; the bat fate; to be killed among the bats as a bird, among the birds as a bat.

What, then, is left for Carlyle's Creed? Logically little, emotionally much. If it must be defined, it was that of a Theist with a difference. A spirit of flame from the empyrean, he found no food in the cold *Deism* of the eighteenth century, and brought down the marble image, from its pedestal, as by the music of the "Winter's Tale," to live among men and inspire them. He inherited and, *coûte que coûte*, determined to persist in the belief that there was a personal God—"a Maker, voiceless, formless, within our own soul." To Emerson he writes in 1836, "My belief in a special Providence grows yearly stronger, unsubduable, impregnable;" and later, "Some strange belief in a special Providence was always in me at intervals." Thus, while asserting that "all manner of pulpits are as good as broken and abolished," he clings to the old Ecclefechan days.

"To the last," says Mr. Froude, "he believed as strongly as ever Hebrew prophet did in spiritual religion," but if we ask the nature of the God on whom all relies, he cannot answer even with the Apostles' Creed. Is He One or Three? "Wer darf ihn nennen." Carlyle's God is not a mere "tendency that makes for righteousness;" He is a guardian and a guide, to be addressed in the words of Pope's *Universal Prayer*, which he adopted as his own. A personal God does not mean a great Figure-head of the Universe—Heine's fancy of a venerable old man, before

he became "a knight" of the Holy Ghost—it means a Supreme Power, Love, or Justice, having relations to the individual man: in this sense Carlyle believed in Him, though more as Justice, exacting "the terriblest penalties," than as Love, preaching from the Mount of Olives. He never entered into controversies about the efficacy of prayer; but, far from deriding, he recommended it as "a turning of one's soul to the Highest." In 1869 he writes:

I occasionally feel able to wish, with my whole softened heart—it is my only form of prayer—"Great Father, oh, if Thou canst have pity on her and on me and on all such." In this at least there is no harm.

And about the same date to Erskine: .

"Our Father;" in my sleepless tossings, these words, that brief and grand prayer, came strangely into my mind with an altogether new emphasis; as if written and shining for me in mild pure splendour on the black bosom of the night there; when I as it were read them word by word, with a sudden check to my imperfect wanderings, with a sudden softness of composure which was much unexpected. Not for perhaps thirty or forty years had I once formally repeated that prayer: nay, I never felt before how intensely the voice of man's soul it is, the inmost inspiration of all that is high and pious in poor human nature, right worthy to be recommended with an "After this manner pray ye."

Carlyle holds that if we do our duty—the best work we can—and faithfully obey His laws, living soberly and justly, God will do the best for us in this life. As regards the next we have seen that he ended with Goethe's hope. At an earlier date he spoke more confidently. On his father's death (*Reminiscences*, vol. i., p. 65) he wrote:

Man follows man. His life is as a tale that has been told: yet under time does there not lie eternity? . . . Perhaps my father, all that essentially was my father, is even now near me, with me. Both he and I are with God. Perhaps, if it so please God, we shall in some higher state of being meet one another, recognise one another. . . . The possibility, nay (in some way) the certainty, of perennial existence daily grows plainer to me.

On the death of Mrs. Welsh he wrote to his wife: "We shall yet go to her. God is great. God is good:" and earlier, in 1835-1836, to Emerson on the loss of his brother:

What a thin film it is that divides the living and the dead. Your brother is in very deed and truth with God, where both you and I are. . . . Perhaps we shall all meet YONDER, and the tears be wiped from all eyes. One thing is no perhaps: surely we shall all meet, if it be the will of the Maker of us. If it be not His will, then is it not better so?

After his wife's death, naturally, the question of Immortality came uppermost in his mind; but his conclusions are, like those of Burns, never dogmatic:

The truth about the matter is absolutely hidden from us. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Yes, if you are God you may have a right to say so; if you are a man what do you know more than I, or any of us?

And later:

What if Omnipotence should actually have said, "Yes, poor mortals, such of you as have gone so far shall be permitted to go farther."

To Emerson in 1867 he writes:

I am as good as without hope and without fear; a gloomily serious, silent, and sad old man, gazing into the final chasm of things in mute dialogue with "Death, Judgment, and Eternity" (dialogue mute on both sides), not caring to discourse with poor articulate speaking mortals, on their sorts of topics—disgusted with the world and its roaring nonsense, which I have no further thought of lifting a finger to help, and only try to keep out of the way of, and shut my door against.

There can be no question of the sincerity of Carlyle's conviction that he had to make war on credulity and to assail the pretences of a *formal Belief* (which he regards as even worse than Atheism) in order to grapple with real Unbelief. After all explanations of Newton or Laplace, the Universe is, to him, a mystery, and we ourselves the miracle of miracles; sight and knowledge leave us no "less forlorn," and beneath all the soundings of science there is a deeper deep. It is this frame of mind that qualified him to be the exponent of religious epochs in history. "By this alone," wrote Dr. Chalmers, "he has done so much to vindicate and bring to light the Augustan age of Christianity in England," adding that it is the secret also of the great writer's appreciation of the higher Teutonic literature. His sombre rather than consolatory sense of "God in History," his belief in the mission of righteousness to constrain unrighteousness, and his Stoic view that good and evil are absolute opposites, are his links with the Puritans, whom he habitually exalts in variations of the following strain:

The age of the Puritans has gone from us, its earnest purpose awakens now no reverence in our frivolous hearts. Not the body of heroic Puritanism alone which was bound to die, but the soul of it also, which was and should have been, and yet shall be immortal, has, for the present, passed away.

Yet Goethe, the only man of recent times whom he regarded with a feeling akin to worship, was in all essentials the reverse of a Puritan.

To Carlyle's, as to most substantially emotional works, may be applied the phrase made use of in reference to the greatest of all the series of ancient books—

Hic liber est in quo quisquis sua dogmata quærit;
Invenit hoc libro dogmata quisque sua.

From passages like those above quoted—his complaints of the falling off of old Scotch faith; his references to the kingdom of a God who has written “in plain letters on the human conscience a Law that all may read;” his insistence that the great soul of the world is just; his belief in religion as a rule of conduct, and his sympathy with the divine depths of sorrow—from all these many of his Scotch disciples persist in maintaining that their master was to the end essentially a Christian. The question between them and other critics who assert that “he had renounced Christianity” is to some extent, not wholly, a matter of nomenclature; it is hard exactly to decide it in the case of a man who so constantly found again in feeling what he had abandoned in thought. Carlyle's Religion was to the last an inconsistent mixture, not an amalgam, of his mother's and of Goethe's. The Puritan in him never dies; he attempts in vain to tear off the husk that cannot be separated from its kernel. He believes in no historical Resurrection, Ascension, or Atonement, yet hungers and thirsts for a supramundane source of Law, and holds fast by a faith in the Nemesis of Greek, Goth, and Jew. He abjures half-way houses; but is withheld by pathetic memories of the church-spires and village graveyards of his

youth from following his doubts to their conclusion; yet he gives way to his negation in his reference to "old Jew lights now burnt out," and in the half-despair of his expression to Froude about the Deity Himself, "He does nothing." Professor Masson says that "Carlyle had abandoned the Metaphysic of Christianity while retaining much of its Ethic." To reverse this dictum would be an overstrain on the other side: but the *Metaphysic* of Calvinism is precisely what he retained; the alleged *Facts* of Revelation he discarded; of the *Ethic* of the Gospels he accepted perhaps the lesser half, and he distinctly ceased to regard the teaching of Christ as final.¹ His doctrine of Renunciation (suggested by the passage about the three Reverences in *Meister's Travels*) is Carlyle's transmutation, if not transfiguration, of Puritanism; but it took neither in him nor in Goethe any very consistent form, save that it meant Temperance, keeping the body well under the control of the head, the will strong, and striving, through all the lures of sense, to attain to some ideal life.

Both write of Christianity as "a thing of beauty," a perennial power, a spreading tree, a fountain of youth; but Goethe was too much of a Greek—though, as has been said, "a very German Greek"—to be, in any proper sense of the word, a Christian; Carlyle too much of a Goth. His Mythology was Norse; his Ethics, despite his prejudice against the race, largely Jewish. He proclaimed his code with the thunders of Sinai, not in the reconciling voice of the Beatitudes. He gives or forces on us world-old truths splendidly set, with a leaning to strength and endurance rather than to advancing thought. He did not, says a

¹ A passage in Mrs. Sutherland Orr's *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, p. 173, is decisive on this point, and perhaps too emphatic for general quotation.

fine critic of morals, recognise that "morality also has passed through the straits." He did not really believe in Content, which has been called the Catholic, nor in Progress, more questionably styled the Protestant virtue. His often excellent practical rule to "do the duty nearest to hand" may be used to gag the intellect in its search after the goal; so that even his Everlasting Yea, as a predetermined affirmation, may ultimately result in a deeper negation.¹

"Duty," to him as to Wordsworth, "stern daughter of the voice of God," has two aspects, on each of which he dwells with a persistent iteration. The *first* is *Surrender* to something higher and wider than ourselves. That he has nowhere laid the line between this abnegation and the self-assertion which in his heroes he commends, partly means that correct theories of our complex life are impossible; but Matthew Arnold's criticism, that his Ethics "are made paradoxical by his attack on Happiness, which he should rather have referred to as the result of Labour and of Truth," can only be rebutted by the assertion that the pursuit of pleasure as an end defeats itself. The *second* aspect of his "Duty" is *Work*. His master Goethe is to him as Apollo to Hercules, as Shakespeare to Luther; the one entire as the chrysolite, the other like the Schreckhorn rent and riven; the words of the former are oracles of the latter battles; the one contemplates and beautifies truth, the other wrestles and fights for it. Carlyle has a limited love of abstract truth; of action his love is unlimited. His lyre is not that of Orpheus, but that of Amphion which built the walls of Thebes. *Laborare est*

¹ Vide Professor Jones's *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, pp. 66-90.

orare. He alone is honourable who does his day's work by sword or plough or pen. Strength is the crown of toil. Action converts the ring of necessity that girds us into a ring of duty, frees us from dreams, and makes us men.

The midnight phantoms feel the spell,
The shadows sweep away.

There are few grander passages in literature than some of those litanies of labour. They have the roll of music that makes armies march, and if they have been made so familiar as to cease to seem new, it is largely owing to the power of the writer which has compelled them to become common property.

Carlyle's practical Ethics, though too little indulgent to the light and play of life, in which he admitted no *ἀδιαφόρα*, and only the relaxation of a rare genial laugh, are more satisfactory than his conception of their sanction, which is grim. His "Duty" is a categorical imperative, imposed from without by a taskmaster who has "written in flame across the sky, 'Obey, unprofitable servant.'" He saw the infinite above and around, but not *in* the finite. He insisted on the community of the race, and struck with a bolt any one who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

All things, the minutest that man does, influence all men, the very look of his face blesses or curses. . . . It is a mathematical fact that the casting of this pebble from my hand alters the centre of gravity of the universe.

But he left a great gulf fixed between man and God, and so failed to attain to the Optimism after which he often strove. He held, with Browning, that "God's in His heaven," but not that "All's right with the world." His view

was the Zoroastrian ἀθάνατος μάχη, "in God's world presided over by the prince of the powers of the air," a "divine infernal universe." The Calvinism of his mother, who said "The world is a lie, but God is truth," landed him in an *impasse*; he could not answer the obvious retort—Did, then, God make and love a lie, or make it hating it? There must have been some other power τὸ ἕτερον, or as Mill in his *Apologia* for *Theism* puts it, a limit to the assumed Omnipotence. Carlyle, accepting neither alternative, inconsequently halts between them; and his prevailing view of mankind¹ adds to his dilemma. He imposes an "infinite duty on a finite being," as Calvin imposes an infinite punishment for a finite fault. He does not see that mankind sets its hardest tasks to itself; or that, as Emerson declares, "the assertion of our weakness and deficiency is the fine innuendo by which the soul makes its enormous claim." Hence, according to Mazzini, "He stands between the individual and the infinite without hope or guide, and crushes the human being by comparing him with God. From his lips, so daring, we seem to hear every instant the cry of the Breton mariner, 'My God, protect me; my bark is so small and Thy ocean so vast.'" Similarly, the critic of Browning, above referred to, concludes of the great prose writer, whom he has called the poet's twin: "He has let loose confusion upon us. He has brought us within sight of the future: he has been our guide in the wilderness; but he died there and was denied the view from Pisgah."

Carlyle's Theism is defective because it is not sufficiently

¹ Some one remarked to Friedrich II. that the philanthropist Sulzer said, "Men are by nature good." "Ach, mein lieber Sulzer," ejaculated Fritz, as quoted approvingly by Carlyle, "er kennt nicht diese verdammte Rasse."

Pantheistic; but, in his view of the succession of events in the "roaring loom of time," of the diorama of majesty girt by mystery, he has found a cosmic Pantheism and given expression to it in a passage which is the culmination of the English prose eloquence as surely as Wordsworth's great Ode is the high-tide mark of the English verse of this century:

Are we not spirits shaped into a body, into an Appearance; and that fade away again into air and Invisibility? This is no metaphor, it is a simple scientific fact; we start out of Nothingness, take figure, and are Apparitions; round us as round the veriest spectre is Eternity, and to Eternity minutes are as years and æons. Come there not tones of Love and Faith as from celestial harp-strings, like the Song of beatified Souls? And again do we not squeak and gibber and glide, bodeful and feeble and fearful, and revel in our mad dance of the Dead—till the scent of the morning air summons us to our still home; and dreamy Night becomes awake and Day? Where now is Alexander of Macedon; does the steel host that yelled in fierce battle shouts at Issus and Arbela remain behind him; or have they all vanished utterly, even as perturbed goblins must? Napoleon, too, with his Moscow retreats and Austerlitz campaigns, was it all other than the veriest spectre hunt; which has now with its howling tumult that made night hideous flitted away? Ghosts! There are nigh a thousand million walking the earth openly at noontide; some half-hundred have vanished from it, some half-hundred have arisen in it, ere thy watch ticks once. O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future ghost within him, but are in very deed ghosts.¹ These limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning passion? They are dust and shadow; a shadow system gathered round our *me*, wherein through some moments or years the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh. So has it been from the beginning, so will it be to the end. Generation after generation takes to itself the form of a body; and forth issuing

¹ One of the strangest freaks of literary heredity is that this phrase seems to have suggested the title of Ibsen's much debated play.

from Cimmerian Night on Heaven's mission appears. What force and fire there is in each he expends, one grinding in the mill of Industry; one hunter-like climbing the giddy Alpine heights of science; one madly dashed in pieces on the rocks of Strife in war with his fellow, and then the heaven-sent is recalled; his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to sense becomes a vanished shadow. Thus, like some wild flaming, wild thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious Mankind thunder and flame in long-drawn, quick succeeding grandeur through the unknown deep. Thus, like a God-created fire-breathing spirit host, we emerge from the Mane, haste stormfully across the astonished earth, then plunge again into the Mane. Earth's mountains are levelled and her seas filled up. On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped; the rear of the host read traces of the earliest van. But whence, O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not. Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.

Volumes might be written on Carlyle's relations, of sentiment, belief, opinion, method of thought, and manner of expression, to other thinkers. His fierce independence, and sense of his own prophetic mission to the exclusion of that of his predecessors and compeers, made him often unconscious of his intellectual debts, and only to the Germans, who impressed his comparatively plastic youth, is he disposed adequately to acknowledge them. Outside the Hebrew Scriptures he seems to have been wholly unaffected by the writings and traditions of the East, which exercised so marked an influence on his New England disciples. He never realised the part played by the philosophers of Greece in moulding the speculations of modern Europe. He knew Plato mainly through the Socratic dialogues. There is, however, a passage in a letter to Emerson (March 13th, 1853) which indicates that he had read, comparatively late in life, some portions of *The Republic*. "I was much struck with Plato last year, and his notions about Democ-

racy—mere *Latter-Day Pamphlets, saxa et faces* . . . refined into empyrean radiance and the lightning of the gods.” The tribute conveyed in the comparison is just; for there is nothing but community of political view between the bitter acorns dropped from the gnarled border oak and the rich fruit of the finest olive in Athene’s garden. But the coincidences of opinion between the ancient and the modern writer are among the most remarkable in literary history. We can only refer, without comments, to a few of the points of contact in this strange conjunction of minds far as the poles asunder. Plato and Carlyle are both possessed with the idea that they are living in a degenerate age, and they attribute its degeneracy to the same causes: *Laissez faire*; the growth of luxury; the effeminate preference of Lydian to Dorian airs in music, education, and life; the decay of the Spartan and growth of the Corinthian spirit; the habit of lawlessness culminating in the excesses of Democracy, which they describe in language as nearly identical as the difference of the ages and circumstances admit. They propose the same remedies: a return to “purer manners, nobler laws,” with the best men in the State to regulate and administer them. Philosophers, says Plato, are to be made guardians, and they are to govern, not for gain or glory, but for the common-weal. They need not be happy in the ordinary sense, for there is a higher than selfish happiness, the love of the good. To this love they must be *systematically educated* till they are fit to be kings and priests in the ideal state; if they refuse they *must*, when their turn comes, be *made to govern*. Compare the following declarations of Carlyle:

Aristocracy and Priesthood, a Governing class and a Teaching class—these two sometimes combined in one, a Pontiff King—there did

not society exist without those two vital elements, there will none exist. Whenever there are born Kings of men you had better seek them out and *breed them to the work*. . . . The few wise will have to take command of the innumerable foolish, they *must be got to do it*.

The Ancient and the Modern, the Greek and the Teuton, are further curiously at one: in their dislike of physical or mental Valetudinarianism (cf. *Rep.* Bs. ii. and iii. and *Characteristics*); in their protests against the morality of consequences, of rewards and punishments as motives for the highest life (the just man, says Plato, crucified is better than the unjust man crowned); in their contempt for the excesses of philanthropy and the pampering of criminals (cf. *Rep.* B. viii.); in their strange conjunctions of free-thinking and intolerance. Plato in the *Laws* enacts that he who speaks against¹ the gods shall be first fined, then imprisoned, and at last, if he persists in his impiety, put to death; yet he had as little belief in the national religion as Carlyle. They both accept Destiny—the *Parcæ* or the *Norns* spin the threads of life—and yet both admit a sphere of human choice. In the *Republic* the souls select their lots, with Carlyle man can modify his fate. The juxtaposition in each of Humour and Pathos (cf. Plato's account of the dogs in a Democracy, and Carlyle's "Nigger gone masterless among the pumpkins," and, for pathos, the image of the soul encrusted by the world as the marine *Glaucus*, or the Vision of *Er* and Natural Supernaturalism) is another contact. Both held that philosophers and heroes were few, and yet both leant to a sort of Socialism, under State control; they both assail Poetry and deride the Stage

¹ Rousseau, in the "*Contrat Social*," also assumes this position; allowing freedom of thought, but banishing the citizen who shows disrespect to the State Religion.

(cf. *Rep.* B. ii. and B. x. with Carlyle on "The Opera"), while each is the greatest prose poet of his race; they are united in hatred of orators, who "would circumvent the gods," and in exalting action and character over "the most sweet voices"—the one enforcing his thesis in the "language of the gods," the other preaching silence in forty volumes of eloquent English speech.

Carlyle seems to have known little of Aristotle. His Stoicism was indigenous; but he always alludes with deference to the teaching of the Porch. Marcus Aurelius, the nearest type of the Philosophic King, must have riveted his regard as an instance of the combination of thought and action; and some interesting parallels have been drawn between their views of life as an arena on which there is much to be done and little to be known, a passage from time to a vague eternity. They have the same mystical vein, alongside of similar precepts of self-forgetfulness, abnegation, and the waiving of desire, the same confidence in the power of the spirit to defy or disdain vicissitudes—ideas which brought both in touch with the ethical side of Christianity—but their tempers and manner are as far as possible apart. Carlyle speaks of no one with more admiration than of Dante, recognising in the Italian his own intensity of love and hate and his own tenacity; but beyond this there is little evidence of the "*Divina Commedia*" having seriously attuned his thought: nor does he seem to have been much affected by any of the elder English poets. He scarcely refers to Chaucer; he alludes to Spenser here and there with some homage, but hardly ever, excepting Shakespeare, to the Elizabethan dramatists.

Among writers of the seventeenth century, he may have found in Hobbes some support of his advocacy of a strong government; but his views on this theme came rather from

a study of the history of that age. Milton he appreciates inadequately. To Dryden and Swift he is just; the latter, whether consciously to Carlyle or not, was in some respects his English master, and the points of resemblance in their characters suggest detailed examination. Their styles are utterly opposed, that of the one resting almost wholly on its Saxon base, that of the other being a coat of many colours; but both are, in the front rank of masters of prose-satire, inspired by the same audacity of "noble rage." Swift's humour has a subtler touch and yet more scathing scorn; his contempt of mankind was more real; his pathos equally genuine but more withdrawn; and if a worse foe he was a better friend. The comparisons already made between Johnson and Carlyle have exhausted the theme; they remain associated by their similar struggle and final victory, and sometimes by their tyrannous use of power; they are dissociated by the divergence of their intellectual and in some respects even their moral natures; both were forces of character rather than discoverers, both rulers of debate; but the one was of sense, the other of imagination, "all compact." The one blew "the blast of doom" of the old patronage; the other, against heavier odds, contended against the later tyranny of uninformed and insolent popular opinion. Carlyle did not escape wholly from the influence of the most infectious, if the most morbid, of French writers, J. J. Rousseau. They are alike in setting Emotion over Reason: in referring to the Past as a model; in subordinating mere criticism to ethical, religious, or irreligious purpose; in being avowed propagandists; in their "deep unrest;" and in the diverse conclusions that have been drawn from their teaching.

Carlyle's enthusiasm for the leaders of the new German literature was, in some measure, inspired by the pride in a

treasure-trove, the regard of a foster-father or *chaperon* who first substantially took it by the hand and introduced it to English society; but it was also due to the feeling that he had found in it the fullest expression of his own perplexities, and at least their partial solution. His choice of its representatives is easily explained. In Schiller he found intellectually a younger brother, who had fought a part of his own fight and was animated by his own aspirations; in dealing with his career and works there is a shade of patronage. Goethe, on the other hand, he recognised across many divergencies as his master. The attachment of the belated Scotch Puritan to the greater German has provoked endless comment; but the former has himself solved the riddle. The contrasts between the teacher and pupil remain, but they have been exaggerated by those who only knew Goethe as one who had attained, and ignored the struggle of his hot youth on the way to attainment. Carlyle justly commends him, not alone for his artistic mastery, but for his sense of the reality and earnestness of life, which lifts him to a higher grade among the rulers of human thought than such more perfect artists and more passionate lyrists as Heine. He admires above all his conquest over the world, without concession to it, saying:

With him Anarchy has now become Peace . . . the once perturbed spirit is serene and rich in good fruits. . . . Neither, which is most important of all, has this Peace been attained by a surrender to Necessity, or any compact with Delusion—a seeming blessing, such as years and dispiritment will of themselves bring to most men, and which is indeed no blessing, since ever continued battle is better than captivity. Many gird on the harness, few bear it warrior-like, still fewer put it off with triumph. Euphorion still asserts “To die in strife is the end of life.”

Goethe only ceased to fight when he had won; his want of sympathy with the so-called Apostles of Freedom, the stump orators of his day, was genuine and shared by Carlyle. In the apologue of the *Three Reverences* in *Meister* the master indulges in humanitarian rhapsody and, unlike his pupil, verges on sentimental paradox, declaring through the lips of the Chief in that imaginary pedagogic province—which here and there closely recalls the *New Atlantis*—that we must recognise “humility and poverty, mockery and despite, disgrace and suffering, as divine—nay, even on sin and crime to look not as hindrances, but to honour them, as furtherances of what is holy.” In answer to Emerson’s Puritanic criticisms Carlyle replies:

Believe me, it is impossible you can be more a Puritan than I; nay, I often feel as if I were far too much so, but John Knox himself, could he have seen the peaceable impregnable *fidelity* of that man’s mind, and how to him also Duty was infinite—Knox would have passed on wondering, not reproaching. But I will tell you in a word why I like Goethe. His is the only *healthy* mind, of any extent, that I have discovered in Europe for long generations; it was he who first convincingly proclaimed to me. . . . “Behold even in this scandalous Sceptico-Epicurean generation, when all is gone but hunger and cant, it is still possible that man be a man.” And then as to that dark ground on which you love to see genius paint itself: consider whether misery is not ill health too, also whether good-fortune is not worse to bear than bad, and on the whole, whether the glorious serene summer is not greater than the wildest hurricane—as Light, the naturalists say, is stronger than Lightning.

Among German so-called mystics the one most nearly in accord with Carlyle was Novalis, who has left a sheaf of sayings—as “There is but one temple in the universe, and that is the body of man,” “Who touches a human hand touches God”—that especially commended themselves to

his commentator. Among philosophers proper, Fichte, in his assertion of the Will as a greater factor of human life and a nearer indication of personality than pure Thought, was Carlyle's nearest tutor. The *Vocation of the Scholar* and *The Way to a Blessed Life* anticipated and probably suggested much of the more speculative part of *Sartor*. But to show their relation would involve a course of Metaphysics.

We accept Carlyle's statement that he learnt most of the secret of life and its aims from his master Goethe: but the closest of his kin, the man with whom he shook hands more nearly as an equal, was Richter—*Jean Paul der einzige*, lord of the empire of the air, yet with feet firmly planted on German earth, a colossus of reading and industry, the quaintest of humourists, not excepting either Sir Thomas Browne or Laurence Sterne, a lover and painter of Nature unsurpassed in prose. He first seems to have influenced his translator's style, and set to him the mode of queer titles and contortions, fantastic imaginary incidents, and endless digressions. His Ezekiel visions as the dream in the first *Flower Piece* from the life of Siebenkäs, and that on *New-year's Eve*, are like previsions of *Sartor*, and we find in the fantasies of both authors much of the same machinery. It has been asserted that whole pages of *Schmelzle's Journey to Flätz* might pass current for Carlyle's own; and it is evident that the latter was saturated with *Quintus Fixlein*. The following can hardly be a mere coincidence. Richter writes of a dead brother, "For he chanced to leap on an ice-board that had jammed itself among several others; but these recoiled, and his shot forth with him, melted away as it floated under his feet, and so sank his heart of fire amid the ice and waves;" while in *Cui Bono* we have:

What is life? a thawing ice-board
On a sea with sunny shore.

Similarly, the eloquently pathetic close of *Fixlein*, especially the passage, "Then began the Æolian harp of Creation," recalls the deepest pathos of *Sartor*. The two writers, it has been observed, had in common "reverence, humour, vehemence, tenderness, gorgeousness, grotesqueness, and pure conduct of life." Much of Carlyle's article in the *Foreign Quarterly* of 1830 might be taken for a criticism of himself.

Enough has been said of the limits of Carlyle's magnanimity in estimating his English contemporaries; but the deliberate judgments of his essays were often more genial than those of his letters and conversation; and perhaps his overestimate of inferiors, whom in later days he drew round him as the sun draws the mist, was more hurtful than his severity; it is good for no man to live with satellites. His practical severance from Mazzini was mainly a personal loss; the widening of the gulf between him and Mill was a public calamity, for seldom have two men been better qualified the one to correct the excesses of the other. Carlyle was the greater genius; but the question which was the greater mind must be decided by the conflict between logic and emotion. They were related proximately as Plato to Aristotle, the one saw what the other missed, and their hold on the future has been divided. Mill had "the dry-light," and his meaning is always clear; he is occasionally open to the charge of being a formalist, allowing too little for the "infusion of the affections," save when touched, as Carlyle was, by a personal loss; yet the critical range indicated by his essay on "Coleridge" on the one side, that on "Bentham" on the other, is as wide as that of his friend; and while neither said anything base, Mill alone is

clear from the charge of having ever said anything absurd. His influence, though more indirect, may prove, save artistically, more lasting. The two teachers, in their assaults on *Laissez faire*, curiously combine in giving sometimes undesigned support to social movements with which the elder at least had no sympathy.

Carlyle's best, because his most independent, friend lived beyond the sea. He has been almost to weariness compared with Emerson, initial pupil later ally, but their contrasts are more instructive than their resemblances. They have both at heart a revolutionary spirit, marked originality, uncompromising aversion to illusions, disdain of traditional methods of thought and stereotyped modes of expression; but in Carlyle this is tempered by greater veneration for the past, in which he holds out models for our imitation; while Emerson sees in it only finger-posts for the future, and exhorts his readers to stay at home lest they should wander from themselves. The one loves detail, hates abstraction, delights to dwell on the minutiae of biography, and waxes eloquent even on dates. The other, a brilliant though not always a profound generaliser, tells us that we must "leave a too close and lingering adherence to facts, and study the sentiment as it appeared in hope, not in history . . . with the ideal is the rose of joy. But grief cleaves to names and persons, and the partial interests of to-day and yesterday." The one is bent under a burden, and pores over the riddle of the earth, till, when he looks up at the firmament of the unanswering stars, he can but exclaim, "It is a sad sight." The other is blown upon by the fresh breezes of the new world; his vision ranges over her clear horizons, and he leaps up elastic under her light atmosphere, exclaiming, "Give me health and a day and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous." Carlyle is a

half-Germanised Scotchman, living near the roar of the metropolis, with thoughts of Weimar and reminiscences of the Covenanting hills. Emerson studies Swedenborg and reads the *Phædo* in his garden, far enough from the din of cities to enable him in calm weather to forget them. "Boston, London, are as fugitive as any whiff of smoke; so is society, so is the world." The one is strong where the other is weak. Carlyle keeps his abode in the murk of clouds illumined by bolts of fire; he has never seen the sun unveiled. Emerson's "Threnody" shows that he has known the shadow; but he has fought with no Apollyons, reached the Celestial City without crossing the dark river, and won the immortal garland "without the dust and heat." Self-sacrifice, inconsistently maintained, is the watchword of the one; self-reliance, more consistently, of the other. The art of the two writers is in strong contrast. The charm of Emerson's style is its precision; his sentences are like medals each hung on its own string; the fields of his thought are combed rather than ploughed: he draws outlines, as Flaxman, clear and colourless. Carlyle's paragraphs are like streams from Pactolus, that roll nuggets from their source on their turbid way. His expressions are often grotesque, but rarely offensive. Both writers are essentially ascetic—though the one swallows Mirabeau, and the other says that Jane Eyre should have accepted Rochester and "left the world in a minority." But Emerson is never coarse, which Carlyle occasionally is; and Carlyle is never flippant, as Emerson often is. In condemning the hurry and noise of mobs the American keeps his temper, and insists on justice without vindictiveness: wars and revolutions take nothing from his tranquillity, and he sets Hafiz and Shakespeare against Luther and Knox. Careless of formal consistency—"the hobgoblin of little minds"—he

balances his aristocratic reserve with a belief in democracy, in progression by antagonism, and in collective wisdom as a limit to collective folly. Leaving his intellectual throne as the spokesman of a practical liberty, Emerson's wisdom was justified by the fact that he was always at first on the unpopular, and ultimately on the winning, side. Casting his vote for the diffusion of popular literature, a wide suffrage, a mild penal code,¹ he yet endorsed the saying of an old American author, "A monarchy is a merchantman which sails well, but will sometimes strike on a rock and go to the bottom; whilst a republic is a raft that will never sink, but then your feet are always in water." Maintaining that the State exists for its members, he holds that the enervating influences of authority are least powerful in popular governments, and that the tyranny of a public opinion not enforced by law need only be endured by voluntary slaves. Emerson confides in great men, "to educate whom the State exists;" but he regards them as inspired mouth-pieces rather than controlling forces: their prime mission is to "fortify our hopes," their indirect services are their best. The career of a great man should rouse us to a like assertion of ourselves. We ought not to obey, but to follow, sometimes by not obeying, him. "It is the imbecility not the wisdom of men that is always inviting the impudence of power."

It is obvious that many of these views are in essential opposition to the teaching of Carlyle; and it is remarkable that two conspicuous men so differing and expressing their

¹ Carlyle, on the other hand, holds "that," as has been said, "we are entitled to deal with criminals as relics of barbarism in the midst of civilisation." His protest, though exaggerated, against leniency in dealing with atrocities, emphatically requisite in an age apt to ignore the rigour of justice, has been so far salutary, and may be more so.

differences with perfect candour should have lived so long on such good terms. Their correspondence, ranging over thirty-eight years (begun in 1834, after Emerson's visit to Craigenputtock, and ending in 1872, before his final trip to England) is, on the whole, one of the most edifying in literary history. The fundamental accord, unshaken by the ruffle of the visit in 1847, is a testimony to the fact that the common perservation of high sentiments amid the irksome discharge of ordinary duties may survive and override the most distinct antagonisms of opinion. Matthew Arnold has gone so far as to say that he "would not wonder if Carlyle lived in the long-run by such an invaluable record as that correspondence between him and Emerson and not by his works." This is paradoxical; but the volumes containing it are in some respects more interesting than the letters of Goethe and Schiller, as being records of "two noble kinsmen" of nearer intellectual claims. The practical part of the relationship on the part of Emerson is very beautiful; he is the more unselfish, and on the whole appears the better man, especially in the almost unlimited tolerance that passes with a smile even such violences as the "Ilias in nuce;" but Carlyle shows himself to be the stronger. Their mutual criticisms were of real benefit. Emerson succeeded in convincing his friend that so-called anarchy might be more effective in subduing the wilderness than any despotism; while the advice to descend from "Himalaya peaks and indigo skies" to concrete life is accepted and adopted in the later works of the American, *Society and Solitude* and the *Conduct of Life*, which Carlyle praises without stint. Keeping their poles apart they often meet half-way; and in matters of style as well as judgment tinge and tend to be transfused into one another, so that in some pages we have to look to the signature to

be sure of the writer. Towards the close of the correspondence Carlyle in this instance admits his debt.

I do not know another man in all the world to whom I can speak with clear hope of getting adequate response from him. Truly Concord seems worthy of the name: no dissonance comes to me from that side. Ah me! I feel as if in the wide world there were still but this one voice that responded intelligently to my own: as if the rest were all hearsays . . . echoes: as if this alone were true and alive. My blessings on you, good Ralph Waldo.

Emerson answers in 1872, on receipt of the completed edition of his friend's work: "You shall wear the crown at the Pan-Saxon games, with no competitor in sight . . . well earned by genius and exhaustive labour, and with nations for your pupils and praisers."

The general verdict on Carlyle's literary career assigns to him the first place among the authors of his time. No writer of our generation, in or out of England, has combined such abundance with such power. Regarding his rank as a writer there is little or no dispute: it is admitted that the irregularities and eccentricities of his style are bound up with its richness. In estimating the value of his thought we must distinguish between instruction and inspiration. If we ask what new truths he has taught, what problems he has definitely solved, our answers must be few. This is a perhaps inevitable result of the manner of his writing, or rather of the nature of his mind. Aside from political parties, he helped to check their exaggeration by his own; seeing deeply into the undercurrent evils of the time, even when vague in his remedies he was of use in his protest against leaving these evils to adjust themselves—what has been called "the policy of drifting"—or of dealing with them only by catchwords. No one set

a more incisive brand on the meanness that often marks the unrestrained competition of great cities; no one was more effective in his insistence that the mere accumulation of wealth may mean the ruin of true prosperity; no one has assailed with such force the mammon-worship and the frivolity of his age. Everything he writes comes home to the individual conscience: his claim to be regarded as a moral exemplar has been diminished, his hold on us as an ethical teacher remains unrelaxed. It has been justly observed that he helped to modify "the thought rather than the opinion of two generations." His message, as that of Emerson, was that "life must be pitched on a higher plane." Goethe said to Eckermann in 1827 that Carlyle was a moral force so great that he could not tell what he might produce. His influence has been, though not continuously progressive, more marked than that of any of his compeers, among whom he was, if not the greatest, certainly the most imposing personality. It had two culminations; shortly after the appearance of the *French Revolution*, and again towards the close of the seventh decade of the author's life. To the enthusiastic reception of his works in the Universities, Mr. Froude has borne eloquent testimony, and the more academically restrained Arnold admits that "the voice of Carlyle, overstrained and misused since, sounded then in Oxford fresh and comparatively sound," though, he adds, "The friends of one's youth cannot always support a return to them." In the striking article in the *St. James's Gazette* of the date of the great author's death we read: "One who had seen much of the world, and knew a large proportion of the remarkable men of the last thirty years, declared that Mr. Carlyle was by far the most impressive person he had ever known, the man who conveyed most forcibly to those who approached

him [best on resistance principles] that general impression of genius and force of character which it is impossible either to mistake or to define." Thackeray, as well as Ruskin and Froude, acknowledged him as, beyond the range of his own *métier*, his master, and the American Lowell, penitent for past disparagement, confesses that "all modern Literature has felt his influence in the right direction;" while the Emersonian hermit Thoreau, a man of more intense though more restricted genius than the poet-politician, declares—"Carlyle alone with his wide humanity has, since Coleridge, kept to us the promise of England. His wisdom provokes rather than informs. He blows down narrow walls, and struggles, in a lurid light, like the Jöthuns, to throw the old woman Time; in his work there is too much of the anvil and the forge, not enough hay-making under the sun. He makes us act rather than think: he does not say, know thyself, which is impossible, but know thy work. He has no pillars of Hercules, no clear goal, but an endless Atlantic horizon. He exaggerates. Yes; but he makes the hour great, the picture bright, the reverence and admiration strong; while mere precise fact is a coil of lead." Our leading journal, on the morning after Carlyle's death, wrote of him in a tone of well-tempered appreciation: "We have had no such individuality since Johnson. Whether men agreed or not, he was a touchstone to which truth and falsehood were brought to be tried. A preacher of Doric thought, always in his pulpit and audible, he denounced wealth without sympathy, equality without respect, mobs without leaders, and life without aim." To this we may add the testimony of another high authority in English letters, politically at the opposite pole: "Carlyle's influence in kindling enthusiasm for virtues worthy of it, and in stirring a sense of

the reality on the one hand and the unreality on the other, of all that men can do and suffer, has not been surpassed by any teacher now living. Whatever later teachers may have done in definitely shaping opinion . . . here is the friendly fire-bearer who first conveyed the Promethean spark; here the prophet who first smote the rock." Carlyle, writes one of his oldest friends, "may be likened to a fugleman; he stood up in the front of Life's Battle and showed in word and action his notion of the proper attitude and action of men. He was, in truth, a prophet, and he has left his gospels." To those who contest that these gospels are for the most part negative, we may reply that to be taught what not to do is to be far advanced on the way to do.

In nothing is the generation after him so prone to be unjust to a fresh thinker as with regard to his originality. A physical discovery, as Newton's, remains to ninety-nine out of a hundred a mental miracle; but a great moral teacher "labours to make himself forgotten." When he begins to speak he is suspected of insanity; when he has won his way he receives a Royal Commission to appoint the judges; as a veteran he is shelved for platitude. So Horace is regarded as a mere jewelry store of the Latin, Bacon, in his *Essays* of the English, wisdom, which they each in fact helped to create. Carlyle's paradoxes have been exaggerated, his partialities intensified in his followers; his critical readers, not his disciples, have learnt most from him; he has helped across the Slough of Despond only those who have also helped themselves. When all is said of his dogmatism, his petulance, his "evil behaviour," he remains the master-spirit of his time, its Censor, as Macaulay is its Panegyrist, and Tennyson its Mirror. He has saturated his nation with a wholesome tonic, and the

practice of any one of his precepts for the conduct of life is ennobling. More intense than Wordsworth, more intelligible than Browning, more fervid than Mill, he has indicated the pitfalls in our civilisation. His works have done much to mould the best thinkers in two continents, in both of which he has been the Greatheart to many pilgrims. Not a few could speak in the words of the friend whose memory he has so affectionately preserved, "Towards me it is still more true than towards England that no one has been and done like you." A champion of ancient virtue, he appeared in his own phrase applied to Fichte, as "a Cato Major among degenerate men." Carlyle had more than the shortcomings of a Cato; he had all the inconsistent vehemence of an imperfectly balanced mind; but he had a far wider range and deeper sympathies. The message of the modern preacher transcended all mere applications of the text *delenda est*. He denounced, but at the same time nobly exhorted, his age. A storm-tossed spirit, "tempest buffeted," he was "citadel-crowned" in his unflinching purpose and the might of an invincible will.

APPENDIX.

CARLYLE'S RELIGION.

THE *St. James's Gazette*, February 11, 1881, writes:

"It is obvious that from an early age he entirely ceased to believe, in its only true sense, the creed he had been taught. He never affected to believe it in any other sense, for he was far too manly and simple-hearted to care to frame any of those semi-honest transmutations of the old doctrines into new-fangled mysticism which had so great a charm for many of his weaker contemporaries. On the other hand, it is equally true that he never plainly avowed his unbelief. The line he took up was that Christianity, though not true in fact, had a right to be regarded as the noblest aspiration after a theory of the Universe and of human life ever formed: and that the Calvinistic version of Christianity was on the whole the best it ever assumed; and the one which represented the largest proportion of truth and the least amount of error. He also thought that the truths which Calvinism tried to express, and succeeded in expressing in an imperfect or partially mistaken manner, were the ultimate governing principles of morals and politics, of whose systematic neglect in this age nothing but evil could come.

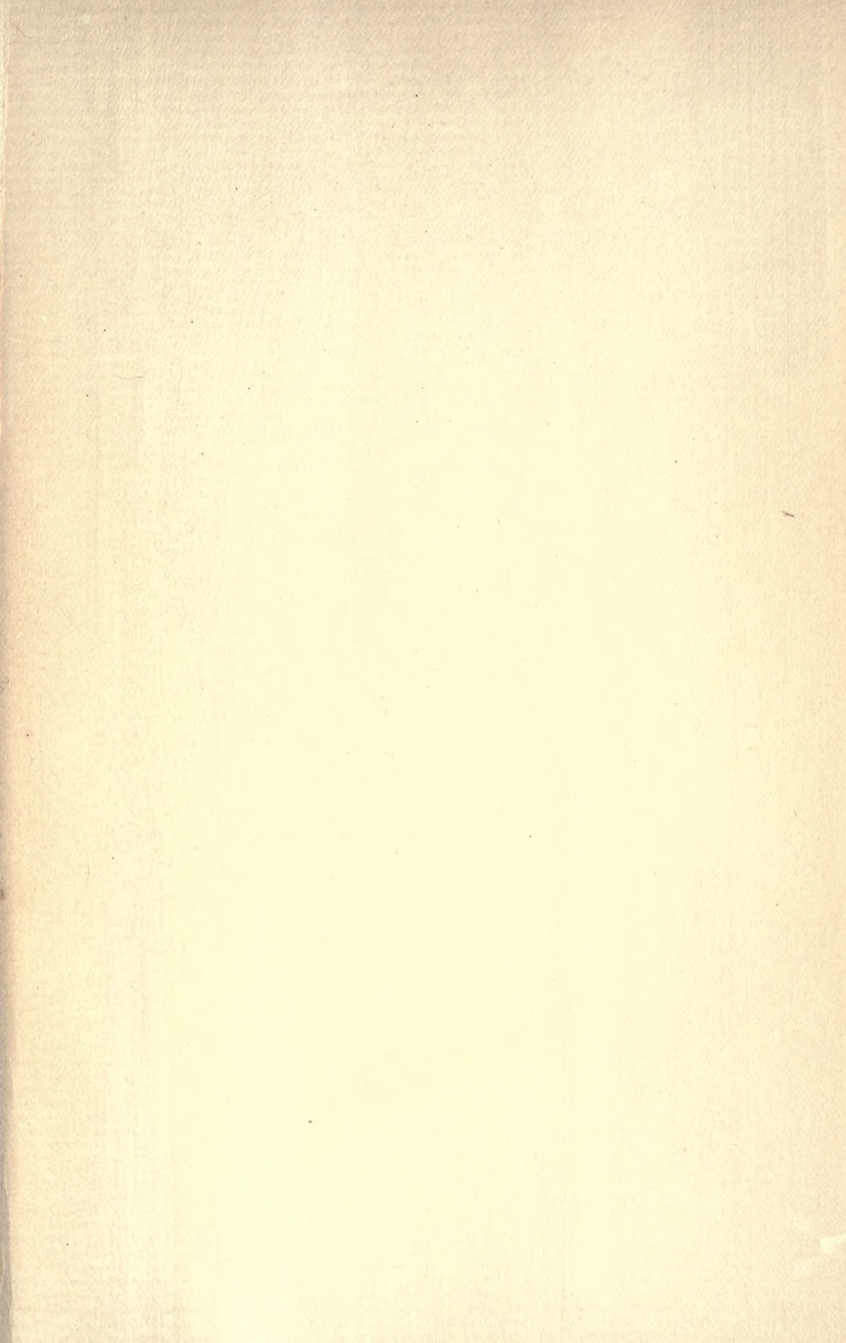
"Unwilling to take up the position of a rebel or revolutionist by stating his views plainly—indeed if he had done so sixty years ago he might have starved—the only resource left to him was that of approaching all the great subjects of life from the point of view of grim humour, irony, and pathos. This was the real origin of his unique style; though no doubt its special peculiarities were due to the wonderful power of his imagination, and to some extent—to a less extent we think than has been usually supposed—to his familiarity with German.

“What, then, was his creed? What were the doctrines which in his view Calvinism shadowed forth and which were so infinitely true, so ennobling to human life? First, he believed in God; secondly, he believed in an absolute opposition between good and evil; thirdly, he believed that all men do, in fact, take sides more or less decisively in this great struggle, and ultimately turn out to be either good or bad; fourthly, he believed that good is stronger than evil, and by infinitely slow degrees gets the better of it, but that this process is so slow as to be continually obscured and thrown back by evil influences of various kinds—one of which he believed to be specially powerful in the present day.

“God in his view was not indeed a personal Being, like the Christian God—still less was He in any sense identified with Jesus Christ; who, though always spoken of with rather conventional reverence in his writings, does not appear to have specially influenced him. The God in which Mr. Carlyle believed is, as far as can be ascertained, a Being possessing in some sense or other will and consciousness, and personifying the elementary principles of morals—Justice, Benevolence (towards good people), Fortitude, and Temperance—to such a pitch that they may be regarded, so to speak, as forming collectively the will of God. . . . That there is some one who—whether by the earthquake, or the fire, or the still small voice—is continually saying to mankind—‘*Discite justitiam moniti*,’ and that this Being is the ultimate fact at which we can arrive . . . is what Mr. Carlyle seems to have meant by believing in God. And if any one will take the trouble to refer to the first few sentences of the Westminster Confession, and to divest them of their references to Christianity and to the Bible, he will find that between the God of Calvin and of Carlyle there is the closest possible similarity. . . . The great fact about each particular man is the relation, whether of friendship or enmity, in which he stands to God. In the one case he is on the side which must ultimately prevail, . . . in the other . . . he will, in due time, be crushed and destroyed. . . . Our relation to the universe can be ascertained only by experiment. We all have to live out our lives. . . . One man is a Cromwell, another a Frederick, a third a Goethe, a fourth a Louis XV. God hates Louis XV. and loves Cromwell. Why, if so, He made Louis XV., and indeed whether He made him or not are idle questions which cannot be answered and should not be asked. There are good men and bad men, all pass alike through

this mysterious hall of doom called life: most show themselves in their true colours under pressure. The good are blessed here and hereafter; the bad are accursed. Let us bring out as far as may be possible such good as a man has had in him since his origin. Let us strike down the bad to the hell that gapes for him. This we think, or something like this, was Mr. Carlyle's translation of election and predestination into politics and morals. . . . There is not much pity and no salvation worth speaking of in either body of doctrine; but there is a strange, and what some might regard as a terrible, parallelism between these doctrines and the inferences that may be drawn from physical science. The survival of the fittest has much in common with the doctrine of election, and philosophical necessity, as summed up in what we now call evolution, comes practically to much the same result as predestination."

THE END.



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